

UPenn – Department of Linguistics

2022A spring: Ling 242 – Construct a language

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Time and Location: MUSE 329; MW 12PM–01:30 PM
office hours: by e-mail appointment

1 Course description

The languages of the world show both a stunning amount of (possibly superficial) differences and surprising degree of (more abstract) similarities. This course introduces students to language typology through lectures and examination of grammars of unfamiliar languages. We will look at many phenomena from the domain of phonology (sound structure), morphology (word structure) and syntax (sentence structure), often showing a complexity beyond the imagination of a native speaker of an Indo-European language. In addition to giving students an overview of what is possible in the languages of the world, we may also address questions about language universals: Are there any true universals, and if yes, how do we account for them? Depending on student interest, we may also investigate constructed languages (Esperanto, Klingon etc.). In addition to these more theoretical aspects, there will also be practical aspects in that

- (a) each student adopts a grammar for the duration of the course, and becomes our resident expert on that language; grammars have been carefully selected to represent the linguistic diversity of the world. See below for the list of grammar choices.
- (b) each student writes a grammar of a language of their own creation which conforms to the typological principles of human language.

There are no formal requirements. The course will be of interest not only to linguistics majors but to all students with an interest in foreign (possibly exotic) languages, especially in their grammar, students who like analytical puzzles, students who like to construct languages etc.

2 Requirements

- regular attendance
- active participation
- read the assigned papers
- grade composed of:
 - Final Project: (33%): create a mini-grammar of your own language that conforms to the limits of natural language: due May xxx (start working on it early!)
 - mid-term exam (33%): essay-type questions on the material covered in the lectures/exercises
 - Completion of weekly tasks (33%): find out how weekly phenomenon is manifested in your adopted language; submit written up-version before class and present briefly on findings to class; participate in class discussion on how the findings fit into linguistic typology

3 Structure

- M: lecture: read assigned material
- W: report on individual grammars

4 Goals

- acquire a grounding in the basics of the structural characteristics of language (sound systems; word structure; grammar)
- learn the conventions of writing about linguistic data
- be confident in investigating the structure of languages with which they are unfamiliar, and be able to identify and use tools and resources to inform such investigation independently
- acquire knowledge of the diversity of linguistic structure in the languages of the world, and the limits on that diversity; they will be able to identify features that we expect to find, and that we don't expect to find, in a human language
- see that a rich array of factors interplay to condition linguistic variation and non-variation, but that these interact with different aspects of linguistic structure

5 (Background) literature (on Canvas)

- handbooks
 - Haspelmath (2001)
 - Shopen (2007)
 - Song (2011)
 - Aikhenvald & Dixon (2017)
 - Pereltsvaig (2012)
- textbooks
 - Comrie (1989)
 - Payne (1997)
 - Whaley (1997)
 - Croft (2003)
- on constructed languages
 - https://knowablemagazine.org/article/society/2021/what-invented-languages-can-1-utm_campaign=K_newsletter_2021-12-12&fbclid=IwAR2Bkfc--PzaXd10uPx8w72Ws0uLh4v6
 - <https://www.imaginaryworldspodcast.org/episodes/do-you-speak-conlang>

6 Resources

- Leipzig glossing rules: The conventions of structural linguistic notation: <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf>
- Ethnologue: Catalog of known living languages (website/database): login via Penn-library: <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/8977>
- World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS): Sizable database of the phonological, grammatical, and lexical properties of languages: <https://wals.info/>
- The Universals Archive: Collection of proposed linguistic universals (esp. implicational universals): <https://typo.uni-konstanz.de/rara/archive-overview/>
- Autotyp: a network of typological linguistic databases <https://www.autotyp.uzh.ch/>
- endangered languages <https://gbs.uni-koeln.de/en/links>

7 Grammars to choose from (on Canvas)

7.1 Africa

1. NILO-SAHARAN:
A Grammar of Lango (Noonan, Michael), 1992
2. NIGER-CONGO:
A reference grammar of Degema (Kari, Ethelbert Emmanuel), 2004
3. KHOISAN:
A grammar of modern Khwe (Christa Kilian-Hatz), 2008
4. AFRO-ASIATIC:
A Grammar of Tamashek (Heath, Jeffrey), 2005

7.2 Europe

5. TURKIC:
Crimean Tatar (Darya Kavitskaya), 2010
6. NORTH CAUCASIAN:
Ingush grammar (Johanna Nichols), 2011
Grammar of Lezgian (Martin Haspelmath), 1993

7.3 Asia-Austronesia

7. DRAVIDIAN:
Malayalam (R.E. Asher & R.C. Kumari), 1997
8. TAI-KADAI:
A Grammar of Lao (Enfield, N.J.), 2007
9. AUSTRO-ASIATIC:
A Grammar of Pacoh (Mark J. Alves), 2006
10. AUSTRONESIAN (Indonesia):
A Grammar of Madurese (Davies, William D), 2010
11. AUSTRONESIAN (Philippine):
Dupanangan Agta : grammar, vocabulary, and texts (Laura C. Robinson), 2012
12. ISOLATE (Indonesia)
Grammar of Hatam (Ger P. Reesink), 1999
13. SEPIK
The Manambu language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea (Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald), 2008
14. TUNGUSIC:
A Grammar of Udihe (Irina Nikolaeva, Maria Tolskaya), 2001
15. ISOLATE (Asia):
A Grammar of Kolyma Yukaghir (Elena Maslova), 2003
16. ESKIMO-ALEUT:
Aleut grammar (Knut Bergsland), 1997

7.4 North/Central America

17. SALISHAN:
Lillooet language (Jan van Eijk), 1997
18. SIOUAN:
A Grammar of Crow (Randolph Graczyk), 2007
19. HOKAN:
A Grammar of Jamul Tiipay (Amy Miller), 2001
20. UTO-AZTECAN:
The Pipil Language of El Salvador (Lyle Campbell), 1985
Ute Reference Grammar (Givón), 2011

7.5 Central/South America

21. MAYAN:
A Grammar of Mam, a Mayan Language (Nora C. England), 1983
22. ISOLATE (South America):
A Grammar of Urarina (Knut J. Olawsky), 2006
23. TACANAN:
A Grammar of Cavinena (Antoine Guillaume), 2008
24. ARAUCANIAN:
Grammar of Mapuche (Ineke Smeets), 2008

8 Topics (draft)

- Phonology
 - Vowel and consonant inventories
 - phonological rules
 - syllable structure
 - stress systems
- morphology
 - morphological operations
 - types of languages
 - morphological categories (gender, number, tense etc.)
 - notion of word, clitics
- syntax
 - case, alignment
 - agreement
 - valence
 - tense, aspect, mood, negation
 - word order
 - clause combining

9 Program (provisional)

01.12.2021	Intro	Whaley (1997: 3-52)
01.19.2021	Intro2/Phonology: basics	
01.24.2021	Phonological typology 1: consonant/vowel inventories; syllables	
	Phonology slides 1-33, 99-102; Odden (2013: 206-208)	
01.26.2021	results from individual languages	
01.31.2021	Phonological typology 2: Phonological rules	
	Phonology slides 34-78; Odden (2013: 208-235)	
02.02.2021	results from individual languages	
02.07.2021	Morphological Typology 1: types of languages, morphological operations, glossing	
	Payne (1997: 27-30), Whaley (1997: 111-139)	
02.09.2021	results from individual languages	
02.14.2021	Morphological Typology 2: allomorphy, notion of word, clitics;	
02.16.2020	results from individual languages	
02.21.2021	Morphological Typology 3: lexical categories, morphosyntactic categories	
	Whaley (1997: 56-65)	
02.23.2021	results from individual languages	
02.28.2021	mid-term review	
03.02.2021	Mid-term exam	
Spring Break		
03.14.2021	Syntactic Typology 1: Case/alignment	Whaley (1997: 139-181)
03.16.2021	results from individual languages	
03.21.2021	Syntactic Typology 2: Agreement	
03.23.2021	results from individual languages	
03.28.2021	Syntactic Typology 3: Valence-changing morphology	Whaley (1997: 183-199)
03.30.2021	results from individual languages	
04.04.2021	Syntactic Typology 4: Tense-aspect-mood (negation)	Whaley (1997: 203-243)
04.06.2021	results from individual languages	
04.11.2021	Syntactic Typology 5: word order	Whaley (1997: 79-107)
04.13.2021	results from individual languages	
04.18.2021	Syntactic Typology 6: dependent clauses	Whaley (1997: 247-266)
04.20.2021	results from individual languages	
04.25.2021	Syntactic Typology 7: Clause combining	Whaley (1997: 267-280)
04.27.2021	results from individual languages	

References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra & Robert M. W. Dixon. 2017. *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Typology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*. Oxford: Blackwell 2nd edn.
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- Odden, David Arnold. 2013. *Introducing phonology*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Payne, Thomas Edward. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax: a guide for field linguists*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
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- Song, Jae Jung. 2011. *The Oxford handbook of linguistic typology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whaley, Lindsay J. 1997. *Introduction to typology : the unity and diversity of language*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.