

Field Methods of Linguistics / Linguistic Field Research

LING 415 / LING 610 — Fall 2014

T,Th 1:05–2:25, Linguistics 117¹

Instructors

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<i>office hours</i>	W 13:00–14:30 or by appointment

Language consultant — Tashi Wangyal

Content of the course

The primary goals of this course is to learn how to collect, organize, and analyze reliable and accurate language data through direct work with a native speaker. In doing this, we'll also learn about topics in linguistic typology, create a collaborative language database, as well as focus on topics specific to the grammar of the language at hand. We'll read and discuss fieldwork best practices, but primarily we will learn by doing. You'll gain practice writing up your findings in a way that is clear and accessible to both academic and non-academic audiences.

Requirements and evaluation

We will investigate the above topics through a combination of readings, short-assignments, in-class discussion, group work, and—most importantly—hands-on elicitation.

	LING 415	LING 610
short assignments	50% (10 x 5% each)	
participation and in-class work	25%	25%
final paper	25%	75%

Participation in in-class sessions

This class is a workshop, not a lecture, and active participation in class and in your group is absolutely essential to its—and your!—success. Participating in class means asking questions, contributing ideas, and taking careful notes. After the add/drop deadline, the class will be divided into 6 small groups. These groups will meet together with Tashi during the out-of-class sessions, and will be responsible for planning and guiding elicitations for certain in-class sessions (see schedule below). While certain groups will be responsible for guiding our elicitation on any given meeting, *everyone should be participating actively in all class sessions*.

Participation in out-of-class sessions

Groups will meet regularly with Tashi outside of class beginning in Week 4. Attendance and participation in these sessions is mandatory; the extra hour will be offset by reduced Thursday meeting time, plus a couple of weeks where there will be no class. These out-of-class sessions are designed to allow you to get more direct elicitation time, delve deeper into certain topics, and to develop independent projects. You will be required to add all elicited material to the *LingSync* database we will create as a class. You may also be required to write up results of your out-of-class elicitations for short assignments.

¹Beginning Week 4, the Thursday class will finish at 2:00pm and groups will begin to meet with Tashi one hour/week outside of class. Out-of-class elicitation schedule to be determined.

Leading elicitation

Together with your group, you will be responsible for leading in-class elicitation for one week during the semester, on the topic assigned for the week, or on a modification of the topic mutually agreed upon by the class. This will involve completing the reading for the week, and coming up with a plan for material to elicit. You will submit your plan to me (1–2 pages, including specific example sentences), Sunday by 5pm. Your group will be responsible for ensuring that the *LingSync* database is up-to-date with the material elicited in class that week.

Short assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will have 10 short assignments to turn in, roughly one per week. These assignments are due on MyCourses in PDF format **at 5pm on Monday** (see *Late Work* below). These will be graded on a 4-point scale: [✓+] = exceeds expectations; [✓] = meets expectations; [✓–] = below expectations; 0 = not turned in. This coarse-grained scale allows me to give you feedback quickly, and given the large number of these assignments, will average out over the course of the term. These will take the form of either short assignments, or responses to the readings, to be discussed.

Response to readings

Some of the short assignments will take the form of a “response” essay. These should be double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins. These responses should provide a short summary of some aspect of the readings, but they should go beyond summary. You can use them to raise questions, offer critical analysis, or apply something in the reading to something you have observed in class or in your own elicitation sessions. Though there is a good deal of freedom in content, these should all be well structured into organized paragraphs and spell-checked for typos and grammar.

Late work

You have one free late-pass which you may use to turn in one of your short assignments 24 hours late. In order to use your late pass, you must let me know you are using it by the original deadline. Once this pass has been used, late work cannot be accepted for grades without a documented medical excuse. You remain responsible for in-class participation.

Final paper

You will be asked to write a final paper on a topic in the grammar of the language of your choosing (in consultation with me). The paper should be roughly 10 pages (double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins). Final papers are due December 8th, and will be discussed further in class.

Readings

There is one required book for the course, available at the McGill bookstore:

- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

We will read virtually the entire book, which will familiarize you with linguistic typology, discuss what kinds of questions we need to ask, and provide background and structure to our class elicitation sessions. The topics for each given week may serve as the topic for elicitation, or we may decide to modify topics as needed. Please see

me if you have a problem purchasing this book. The Payne readings will be supplemented later in the course with some specific readings on the language we are investigating.

Though there are general good practices for conducting field work, and some things one should never do, there is no magic formula for how to do fieldwork. What works in one situation, may not work in another situation. In this class we will learn by doing, and on the whole we will not devote much in-class time to discussing “right” and “wrong” ways to do fieldwork. That said, there is a lot of literature on fieldwork and fieldwork methodology, and the other readings are intended to give you a sense for some of the issues we will want to keep in mind as we go along.

All readings besides the Payne book will all be listed on the MyCourses website, either as directly-downloadable articles, or as links to the McGill library website. Your responsibility is to complete the reading before coming to class; all readings are required unless marked as optional. Altogether, you can expect to read approximately 2–3 articles or chapters per week (roughly 100 pages).

University regulations

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Course outline (subject to modification)

1. **Week 1 — Introduction**

T 9/2

- **Reading:**
 - Bowerman 2008, ch. 11: *Ethical Field Research*
 - **In class:** Introduction, syllabus, class organization, fieldwork handout
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Th 9/4

- **Reading:**
 - Bowerman 2008, chs. 1 & 3: *Introduction & Starting to Work on a Language*
 - **skim:** Hale 2001: *Ulwa, The Beginnings of a Language Research Project*
 - **In class:** fieldwork handout, record a text
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2. **Week 2 — Phonology**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 1: Text transcription

T 9/9

- **Reading:**
 - Bowerman 2008, ch. 5: *Fieldwork on Phonetics and Phonology*
 - Vaux and Cooper 2003, chs. 2–3: *Transcription & Basic Lexicography*
 - **In class:** Swadesh list, phoneme inventory, work on text
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Th 9/11

- **Reading:**
 - Bowerman (2008), ch. 6: *Eliciting: Basic Morphology and Syntax*
 - **skim:** Rice (2001): *Learning as One Goes*
 - **In class:** work on text; sounds and grammar basics
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3. **Week 3 — Phonology cont.**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 2: Response to readings

T 9/16

- **Reading:**
 - Matthewson (2004): *Methodology of Semantic Fieldwork*
- **In class:** Work on text; sounds and grammar basics

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Th 9/18

- **Reading:**
 - Vaux and Cooper (2003), ch. 4: *Semantics*
 - **skim:** Mithun (2001): *Who Shapes the Record?*
 - **In class:** Work on text; sounds and grammar basics
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4. **Week 4 — Grammar basics, typology overview** (Elicitation schedule begins)

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 3: Phonology write-up

T 9/23

- **Reading:**
 - Payne 1997, chs. 0–2: *Describing morphosyntax*
 - Vaux and Cooper 2003, ch. 11: *Syntax I: Collection techniques and session planning*
 - **In class:** Typology overview, typological classification
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Th 9/25

- **Reading:**
 - Payne 1997, ch. 3: *Grammatical categories*
 - **In class:** Typology overview, typological classification
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5. **Week 5 — Constituent order typology**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 4: Payne ch. 1 write-up; use outside sources

T 9/30 — *no class*

Th 10/2

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997), ch. 4: *Constituent order typology*
 - **skim:** Noonan (2005): *Grammar writing for a grammar-reading audience*
 - **In class:** Constituent order typology
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6. **Week 6 — Noun and noun phrase operations**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 5: Morphology and typological classification write-up

T 10/7

- **Reading:**

- Payne (1997), ch. 5: *Noun and NP operations*
 - **In class:** Group 1 leads elicitation: Noun and NP operations
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Th 10/9

- **Reading:**
 - Rice (2006): *Letting the language tell its story*
 - **In class:** Group 1 leads elicitation: Noun and NP operations
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7. **Week 7 — Predicate nominals**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 6: Response to readings

T 10/14

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997) ch. 6: *Predicate nominals and related constructions*
 - **In class:** Elicitation; taking stock
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Th 10/16 — *no class*

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
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8. **Week 8 — Grammatical relations**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 7: Write-up on the noun phrase

T 10/21

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997) ch. 7: *Grammatical relations*
 - **In class:** Group 2 leads elicitation: grammatical relations
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Th 10/23

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
 - **In class:** Group 2 leads elicitation: grammatical relations
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9. **Week 9 — Voice and valence operations**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 8: Final paper proposal

T 10/28

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997) ch. 8: *Voice and valence operations*
 - **In class:** Group 3 leads elicitation: voice and valence
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Th 10/30

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
 - **In class:** Group 3 leads elicitation: voice and valence
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10. **Week 10 — Other verb and VP operations**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 9: Response to readings

T 11/4

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997) ch. 9: *Other verb and VP operations*
 - **In class:** Group 4 leads elicitation: verb and VP operations
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Th 11/6

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
 - **In class:** Group 4 leads elicitation: verb and VP operations
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11. **Week 11 — Verb and VP operations, cont.**

- **Turn in:** Short assignment 10: Write-up on the verb phrase

T 11/11

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
- **In class:** Verb and VP operations, cont.

Th 11/13 — No class, Thanksgiving

12. **Week 12 — Pragmatically marked structures**

T 11/18

- **Reading:**

- Payne (1997) ch. 10: *Pragmatically marked structures*
- **In class:** Group 5 leads elicitation

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Th 11/20

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
- **In class:** Group 5 leads elicitation

13. **Week 13 — Clause combinations**

T 11/25

- **Reading:**
 - Payne (1997) ch. 11: *Clause combinations*
- **In class:** Group 6 leads elicitation

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Th 11/27

- **Reading:**
 - TBA
- **In class:** Group 6 leads elicitation

Final papers due 12/8

Readings

- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hale, Ken. 2001. Ulwa (Southern Sumu): The beginnings of a language research project. In *Linguistic fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff, 76–101. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369–415.
- Mithun, Marianne. 2001. Who shapes the record: the speaker and the linguist. In *Linguistic fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff, 34–54. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Noonan, Michael. 2005. Grammar writing for a grammar-reading audience. *Studies in Language* 30:351–365.
- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rice, Keren. 2001. Learning as one goes. In *Linguistic fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff, 230–249. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rice, Keren. 2006. Let the language tell its story? the role of linguistic theory in writing grammars. In *Catching language: The standing challenge of grammar writing*, ed. Felix K. Ameka, Alan Dench, and Nicholas Evans, 235–268. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Vaux, Bert, and Justin Cooper. 2003. *Introduction to linguistic field methods*. Muenchen: LINCOM Europa.