

LING 415/LING 610: Field Methods of Linguistics/Linguistic Field Research Fall 2024

Instructors: Profs. Heather Goad and Martina Martinović

Contact: email via MyCourses

Lecture: M/W 1:05pm–2:25pm

Office hours: Martina: W 3:00pm–5:00pm; Heather: T 2:30pm–3:30pm, W 3pm–4pm

Language consultant: Thilor Ndiaye

Course description: This course provides an introduction to linguistic fieldwork. We will work with a native speaker of **Sereer**, a language spoken in Senegal, and attempt to determine the basics of the structure of the language, including the phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems. We will learn about elicitation techniques, data management, transcription and analysis, and various practical issues surrounding the collection of linguistic data.

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Learn and use techniques for elicitation of linguistic data.
- Grapple with linguistic analysis of “real” data.
- Practice writing linguistic descriptions.

Readings The readings will come from different sources, and will all be posted on myCourses.

Requirements and evaluations: We will investigate the above topics through a combination of readings, short-assignments, in-class discussion, group work, and—most importantly—active elicitation. Class attendance is mandatory, as the main component of this class involves hands-on work with the speaker. Missing more than 40% of class without a valid medical excuse will result in automatic failure of the course.

	LING 415	LING 610
Discussion posts	15%	15%
Assignments	40% (4 x 10%)	28% (4 x 7%)
Leading elicitation	15%	12%
Final paper	30%	45%

Class sessions This course is first and foremost about collecting and analyzing linguistic data and therefore works best when students are actively participating in all elicitation sessions. We will spend a great deal of time collecting and organizing the data, going over our findings, thinking about their implications, formulating analytical hypotheses, and planning ways to elicit more data to test our ideas. After the add/drop deadline, the class will be divided into 7 groups. The groups will meet with Thilor during out-of-class sessions, and will be responsible for planning and guiding elicitations for one in-class session each (see schedule).

Out-of-class sessions Each group will meet weekly with Thilor outside of class beginning in the week of September 23 for one 45-minute session. In out-of-class sessions, you will have the opportunity to delve deeper into certain topics and develop your final papers. After each session you are responsible for summarizing what you did and discussing any highlights from the session, and posting your findings (we will decide what the best place is for us to share this would be). You must post your findings within two work days. This is the *Discussion posts* portion of your grade. If you satisfy all of the requirements listed here, you will receive full credit.

Leading elicitation We will talk about the details of elicitations in class, but here are the basics. Each group will be responsible for leading elicitation sessions one week. Together with the instructor(s), you will be required to come up with goals for the session, the type(s) of elicitation you want to do, and the actual set of things to be elicited (the protocol). You will prepare the protocol in advance so that i) you can review and refine it with the instructor(s) before the session and ii) you can provide other class members with a copy. For each topic, you will decide what you want to cover in class elicitation, and what you would like your class members to do in out-of-class sessions. You therefore need to meet with the instructor(s) by Thursday the week before your elicitation, and submit the elicitation protocol by the end of the day on Friday on MyCourses. The group leading the elicitation is also responsible for keeping the online database up-to-date with the material elicited in class that week. If you satisfy all of the requirements listed here, you will receive full credit.

Database We will have a password-protected database for data storage. It will be your responsibility to ensure that all data you elicit is entered into the database. You therefore must update the database every week, within two work days of either class or individual elicitation.

Assignments You will have 4 assignments to turn in. They are due on myCourses in PDF format on Friday of the week in which they are due (see schedule). Your written work will be graded using the following metric. Please note that your final assigned grade is **not** an average of the columns below. Rather, the assigned grade is a subjective measure that takes all factors into account but may weigh them differently in different cases.

Criteria	Exemplary	Accomplished	Adequate	Deficient
Description of the data				
Generalizations drawn from the data				
Clarity of form and presentation				

Final paper and presentation You will write a final paper on a topic of your choosing related to any aspect of the grammar of Sereer. Final papers are due on **December 16**. In the final week of class, you will hold a presentation on the topic of your paper. Detailed instructions on the final paper will be provided separately.

Policy on use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications The work you submit in this course must represent your own generalizations and analysis (“your own” can include members of your group in the case of assignments). Using AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to produce work that is evaluated limits your learning and misrepresents the skills and achievements that are being assessed in this course. Any use of AI tools for work submitted for evaluation in this course must be approved beforehand by the instructor; otherwise, such use will be treated as a form of cheating and will be reported to the Disciplinary Officer of your Faculty.

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.

Territory acknowledgement McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Schedule (Tentative and subject to adjustment)

Please complete all the readings for the week before the class on Monday. The readings for the first class address the basic issues that come up in fieldwork, from the practical and ethical side. Complete them by the end of the third week.

Week 1	Introduction	
W 8/28	<i>Bowern (2008): Ch.1 & 11; Meakins et al. (2018): Ch.1 ; Matthewson (2004); Deal (2015)</i>	
Week 2	Building a segmental inventory	
M 9/2	LABOUR DAY	
W 9/4	<i>Vaux & Cooper (2003): Ch. 2 & 3; Meakins et al. (2018): Ch. 5</i>	Assignment 1
Week 3	Phonological rules and constraints	
M 9/16	<i>Vaux & Cooper (2003): Ch. 7</i>	
W 9/18		
Week 4	Word-level prosody	
M 9/23	<i>Vaux & Cooper (2003): Ch. 8; Himmelmann & Ladd (2008)</i>	
W 9/25		
Week 5	Grammatical categories & Constituent order (Group 1)	
M 9/30	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.3-4, Vaux & Cooper (2003): Ch.11;</i>	
W 10/2	<i>Meakins et al. (2018): Ch.6</i>	Assignment 2
Week 6	NPs (Group 2)	
M 10/7	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.5; Vaux & Cooper (2003): Ch.9</i>	
W 10/9		
BREAK		
Week 7	Tense & Aspect (Group 3)	
M 10/21	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.9 (9.3), Moser (2014), Cover (2015)</i>	
W 10/23		
Week 8	Voice and valence (Group 4)	
M 10/28	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.8</i>	
W 10/30	Assignment 3	
Week 9	Questions and Relative clauses (Group 5)	
M 11/4	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.10 (10.3), Ch.11 (11.5), Comrie (1998)</i>	
W 11/6		
Week 10	Topic, Focus (Group 6)	
M 11/11	<i>Payne (1997): Ch.10, Hartmann (2006), Amfo (2018)</i>	
W 11/13	Paper proposal	
Week 11	Negation & Mood (Group 7)	
M 11/18	<i>Payne (1997): Ch 9 (9.3.3), Ch.10 (10.2), Montébran (2020)</i>	
W 11/20		
Week 12	TBD	
M 11/25		
W 11/27		
Week 13	Presentations	
M 12/2	Presentations	
W 12/4	Presentations	

References

- Amfo, Nana Aba Appiah. 2018. The encoding of information structure in African languages. In *The Routledge Handbook of African Linguistics*, Augustine Agwuele and Adams Bodomo (eds.). London: Routledge.
- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan. **Available online through the McGill library.**
- Comrie, Bernard. 1998. Rethinking the typology of relative clauses. *Language Design* 1, 59-86.
- Cover, Rebecca T. 2015. Semantic fieldwork on TAM. In *Methodologies in Semantic Fieldwork*, M. Ryan Bochnak and Lisa Matthewson (eds). New York: Oxford University Press
- Deal, Amy Rose. 2015. Reasoning About Equivalence in Semantic Fieldwork. In *Methodologies in Semantic Fieldwork*, M. Ryan Bochnak and Lisa Matthewson (eds). New York: Oxford University Press
- Hartmann, Katharina. 2006. Focus constructions in Hausa. In *The Architecture of Focus*, Valéria Molnár and Susanne Winkler (eds.). Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Himmelman, Nikolaus & Robert Ladd. 2008. Prosodic description: An introduction for fieldworkers. *Language Documentation & Conservation* 2, 244-274.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369–415.
- Meakins, Felicity, Myfany Turpin, and Jennifer Green. 2018. *Understanding linguistic fieldwork*. London: Routledge.
- Montébran, Aurore. 2020. Asymmetries in negation in the Atlantic languages: a preliminary comparison. In *West African languages. Linguistic theory and communication* eds. Nina Pawlak and Izabela Will, 140-152. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Moser, Amalia. 2014. Aspect and aktionsart: A study on the nature of grammatical categories. In *Major Trends in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics* 1. London: De Gruyter Open Poland.
- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Vaux, Bert, and Justin Cooper. 2003. *Introduction to linguistic field methods*. Muenchen: LINCOM Europa.