

Linguistics 221 B and C: Field Methods

Winter and Spring 2005

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Office hours: Monday 1-2:30 or by appointment

During the fall quarter of this course, we have successfully determined the phonemic system of Sinhala and have decided upon an orthography. Congratulations! These are important and critical steps in doing field work and must be done properly in order to lay the ground work for further studies.

The winter and spring quarters will be devoted to learning as much as we can about the remaining areas of the language, especially morphology and syntax, but also semantics and discourse.

Specific skills to be taught:

- Use of databases and spreadsheets to keep track of texts and paradigms
- Elicitation, recording, and transcription of texts
- Use of planned elicitation to uncover syntactic and morphological structures
- Analysis of morphology and syntax within a typological framework
- Writing, Writing, Writing!
- Continued discussion of non-academic issues of fieldwork

Course Requirements (for both quarters)

Each student will be required to complete the following tasks:

- Attend class regularly and contribute to class discussions
- Meet with the consultant weekly in an independent elicitation session
- Lead elicitation and transcribe in class on a rotating basis
- Lead discussion of one chapter of the Ratliff and Newman book (if you haven't already done so)
- Add verb paradigms to the shared Excel spreadsheet
- Record, transcribe and interlinearize one text, to be distributed to the class
- Work on one "big project": a theoretically based paper to be presented at the workshop in June. This paper will be well organized, well argued, and well written, as close as you can get to a journal article within the constraints of a field-methods class.
- Write two shorter papers, one of which is descriptive, and one of which is theoretically based

The texts

It is important to put together a text database as soon as possible, so that we have the data to use as input to the rest of our studies. This will be the focus of the first two weeks of the quarter. Each student should transcribe a text of at least two minutes in length. Students doing elicitation in pairs may work on this together. Aim for finishing by January 21st at the latest.

Tips:

- Alternate transcribing and glossing as you go
- Type up what you've transcribed after each session
- Leave asterisks for morphemes that you don't know
- If there are aspects that you don't understand, bring them to class

Once we have the texts typed up and distributed, we will put together a FileMaker Pro database of the texts (just text lines, gloss lines, and reference lines) that can then be searched.

The short papers

These papers may be on topics of your choice. See attached list for ideas. Be sure to talk to me about your topic ahead of time. By "short", I mean no more than 15 pages.

The descriptive paper should be in reference grammar format. Look through some grammars and see how they have (or haven't) dealt with the issue you are covering. Choose a grammar to use as a model. Write in a clear descriptive style with numbered examples.

The theoretical paper must make substantial reference to one or more theoretical articles. By "substantial reference", I mean that the substance of the journal article should significantly inform your work, allowing you to cast your analysis within a particular framework. Your paper should have a thesis and clear arguments that support or argue against the theoretical position of the articles.

The BIG Project (but not necessarily a *long* project)

Each student will choose a topic for this project based on his or her interests. Please discuss ideas with me as early as possible. (Fall quarter paper topics are acceptable). I recommend that you write one of your other papers on this topic to explore it in a more preliminary manner. The production of this paper will require the following steps:

- Selection of topic
- Elicitation of relevant data
- Production of an annotated bibliography of relevant literature (including typological, theoretical, Sinhala-specific, Indo-Aryan, and areal literature) by end of winter quarter
- Production of a clearly defined thesis and outline by the end of the third week of Spring quarter
- First draft of paper to peer editor by another student, due to that student on April 29th (returned by May 3)
- Second draft of paper to me by May 13th
- Third draft of paper to me by May 27th