

LINGUISTICS 3925: FIELD METHODS

First Semester 2005
Department of Linguistics
University of Sydney

SYLLABUS

Content

This course will provide a general introduction to field-methods through looking at a relatively unknown language. In thirteen weeks we cannot hope to give a realistic field language learning situation, let alone cover the whole of the language. Instead we will look at and practise methods for doing field work on the phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of the language, including computer-aided methods. We will also look a little at language in use. We will discuss practical, theoretical and ethical issues of doing fieldwork on a language. There will be a general class project, preparing on computer a basic dictionary of the language.

Who is the course for?

The course is for students with a knowledge of linguistics who want to learn about field methods or who want to learn something of a language of Indonesia without a good grammatical description. You must be prepared to work each week on this course -- it is not possible to pass by working very hard in the last couple of weeks.

I assume that students will already know how to use computers for basic word-processing, or else that they will acquire this knowledge on their own. I will demonstrate software on Macintosh computers.

Method

Each week we will have one hour of general elicitation with the language teacher, and one hour of discussion of the data collected, or of introduction to software for fieldwork. As well each pair of students will have half an hour per week elicitation with the language teacher. During the course, each student will :

- tape-record one of the class elicitation sessions, archive the tape, make copies for student use (everyone should maintain their own notes, but the official recorder will write up field notes on computer and have them ready for discussion at the next non-field session).
- choose a semantic domain, elicit vocabulary in that domain, record it on computer in a basic dictionary format
- work either alone or with one other student to record and transcribe a short text or dialogue using IT.
- choose a topic on any aspect of the language, elicit material on the topic, check the elicited material against textual and any other available material, write an essay on the topic in the manner of a sketch grammar. OR choose one of the Max Planck Extended Field Manual projects, carry it out and write up the results.

Classes

Everyone is encouraged to attend the [Computer-aided Fieldwork day](#), 18 March, 9.30 - 4.30.
There will be three types of class, times arranged in the first week

General sessions (1 - 2 hours per week)

Computer lab sessions (1 hour per week for 5 weeks)

Sessions in pairs with the consultant (these will last about 15 minutes)

Online learning

WebCt: <http://learn-on-line.usyd.edu.au/webct/public/home.pl>

Useful Weblinks:

<http://www.teaching.arts.usyd.edu.au/linguistics/lngs3925/usefullinks.html>

Assessment

10%	Phonology and orthography discussion.	Due 8 April.
30%	Dictionary section.	Due 6 May.
10%	Field notes (to be available for use the week after the session)	
10%	Text transcription.	Due 20 May.
40%	Paper on language topic (ca. 2,000 words excluding examples).	Due 14 June.

READING

Here are some interesting references on field methods.

- Abbi, Anvita. 2001. A manual of linguistic field work and structures of Indian languages: LINCOP handbooks in linguistics ; 17. Muenchen: LINCOP Europa.
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- Dixon, Robert M. W. 1983. *Searching for Aboriginal languages : memoirs of a field worker*. St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press.
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- Everett, Daniel L. . 2004. Coherent fieldwork. In *Linguistics today - Facing a greater challenge*, ed. Piet van Sterkenburg, 141-162? Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
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Yegerlehner, J. 1955. A note on eliciting techniques. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 21:286-288.

SPECIAL-CONSIDERATION

Anyone who wishes to be excused from a problem-set should see the tutor or lecturer, and should hand in to the Faculty Office and the SEAHFM Student Centre in the Mills Building a special consideration form, available from <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/faculty/pages/specialconform%20doc.pdf>. It is VERY important that you take this form with you to the doctor that you see, because they have to sign the form. A normal medical certificate is NOT sufficient. This is a change in the University's policy.

PENALTIES FOR LATE WORK

The problems must be handed in on time. One mark will be deducted per day: thus if a problem set which is due on Friday is handed in on Monday, 3 marks will be deducted, unless you have a special consideration form as described above. On no account can problem solutions be accepted after they have been discussed in a lecture or tutorial.

APPEALS PROCESS

If you feel that we have marked you unfairly, or that the assessment procedures are flawed, first discuss your problem with the lecturer or the tutor. You may also contact the Chair of Department, Professor William Foley. You can appeal informally, or in writing. All appeals against a marking decision, or requests that work be re-marked, must be made within six months of the release of results for the unit of study, except in exceptional circumstances.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Part of learning to write in a scholarly way is to learn how to refer to other people's work. If you use other people's work in your own work, you must acknowledge this properly. Not acknowledging the sources of the words and ideas that you use in your work is unacceptable in academic work, and is called plagiarism. The University has procedures for penalising students who do not follow principles of academic honesty. We ask you to read the University's policy, which is available at:

http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/policies/Academic_Honesty_Cwk.pdf

Aims of the Course

These aims are linked to the generic skills that the University of Sydney hopes you will achieve by the time you finish your degree.

Thinking skills

At the end of this unit you should:

- (a) be able to exercise critical judgement in analysing language material
- (b) be capable of rigorous and independent thinking, through problem-solving
- (c) exercise creativity and imagination in understanding and discussing the functions of language.

Knowledge and practical skills

At the end of this unit you should:

- (a) have a general understanding of the description and analysis of the structural patterns of the field language.
- (b) have an understanding of the methods of eliciting data, and of the limitations of these
- (c) have an understanding of basic lexicography
- (d) be able to identify, access, organise and communicate knowledge in both written and oral English;
- (e) have the ability to use software for organising, analysing and archiving data.

Personal skills

Carrying out the work for this unit should improve your ability

- (a) to plan and achieve goals through organising and analysing your field data.
- (b) the ability to work with others through working together to understand the language