FIELD LINGUISTICS
JAL 401F/JAL 1145S. Fall 2000.

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978-1763
office hours: Monday 2-3:30, Wednesday 2-3:30, Thursday 3-4 or by appointment

This course has several goals:
  i.   learn to apply linguistic knowledge from previous courses to the collection and analysis of raw data by working with a speaker of a language that is (I hope!) unknown to you.
  ii. learn how to rethink your data and analysis, ensuring the best possible analysis and most reliable data
  iii. learn how to manage and organize linguistic data in both a data base and on paper

In order to meet these goals, we will work with a native speaker of a language unknown to participants in the class. We will gain experience at gathering data of various types (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, textual) from this language. We will make use of a data-base program to aid in data organization. We will also make tapes to learn how to use a tape recorder effectively in data gathering.

The language this year is Urhobo, a language of the Nigerian delta. The consultant is Tony Adah.

There is a book that you will find useful for this course. I have not ordered it, but there is a copy available in the department that can be borrowed overnight or used during the day in the department. It is in my mail box at the moment, and will be moved to the departmental library once someone begins working there.

Thomas E. Payne. *Describing morphosyntax: a guide for field linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997. (P/241/P39/1997)

In order to gain some knowledge of a range of areas of the language, you will be required to prepare a data file, write papers and make presentations, and write one final paper on a topic of your choice. The content of some of the papers is outlined on the following pages, and further details will be given as the course progresses.

1. One page write-up of first week's work (due Monday September 18).
One important aspect of field work involves keeping on top of the material that you collect. You will be doing a number of write-ups and presentations of the elicitation that you have done. This will include a detailed summary of what you have found and comments on what questions arise given what you have discovered so far.

2. Data file.
In field work, you collect a large amount of data on a language, and it is necessary to learn how to manage your data so that it is usable. While traditionally linguists made card files to help in organizing their data, we will use a data base program in this task.

You will be required to turn in a data file (details to be given later). We will have a session on using a data base, and a tutor (Daniel Hall) will be available to help you with your data base.

While you can use any data base program that you choose, on a computer of your choice, instruction on creating a data base on the Macintosh will be given in class.

The purpose of this task is to teach you how to organize your data. While I will collect only a short data file, you will probably find it useful to continue the file for your later work; this is up to you, however.

The next set of topics allows you the opportunity to explore different aspects of the language. Each paper should be eight to ten pages long, and reflect the extent of your knowledge at the time of writing the paper. In these papers, you should briefly introduce your topic, present (in an organized fashion) the data you have that is relevant along with pertinent discussion, and draw conclusions. The topics are each very large, and you cannot expect to do a thorough job on any of them; the purpose of these papers is to give you an introduction to a large range of structures in the language.

3. Phonology paper.

The goal of this paper is to present the phonological system of the language as you understand it so far. You should set out the consonant and vowel inventories; give minimal (or near minimal) pairs to show that these sounds are indeed distinctive in the language; describe any allophones of the sounds that you have discovered and the environments in which the different allophones occur (this latter can be done by writing phonological rules or by simply describing the environments). If there are sounds that you have not heard, but you think might be present in the language, you should point this out and discuss why you would expect these sounds. You should also include lists of possible consonant clusters (within morphemes, between morphemes, any cross-word pattern (e.g. vowel harmony). Discussion of syllable structure is often useful as well. Notice that by doing this paper, you are defining a further research task for yourself (always a good thing in field work!). Be sure to identify these questions for further research.

4. Morphology/syntax paper.

In this paper, you should present what you know so far about the morphology and syntax of the language. With respect to morphology, this can include discussion of morphological processes (e.g. compounding, affixation, reduplication), lists of affixes and their meanings (organized in some fashion; e.g. by category the affix attaches to; by semantics), ordering of morphemes within a word (e.g. in a language with a plural marker and case marking, what order do they come in?). With respect to syntax, some of the following topics might be relevant: word order, including the ordering of subject, direct object, indirect object, oblique object, adverb, etc. within the clause; the structure of complement clauses (e.g., what is the position of complement clauses in the sentence; is there an overt complementizer or complementizers?; if so, where do they go; what is the internal structure of the complement sentence [e.g., does the verb have tense; are there any word order differences between main clauses and complement clauses; are subjects coreferential to the main clause subject present in the complement clause; does the logical subject of the complement clause pattern like a complement subject or like a main clause])? Those of you who have taken intermediate syntax or are taking intermediate

syntax this term may well want to put these questions in current terms, but this is not required.

8. Final paper.

This paper is on a topic of your choice. It might be a topic that grows out of one of your earlier papers, or it may be a new topic on something else that interests you. You should discuss your topic with me several weeks before the paper is due, so that if it does not seem to be reasonable (e.g. too broad, too narrow, too hard, too easy, etc.), we can find you a good topic. This paper should be of greater depth than any of the other papers. In this paper, you should introduce your topic, present your data (in some detail), and give your analysis. You could do a paper similar in nature to the others (except in greater depth). Alternatively, you can examine a topic within a theoretical framework that you have gained from your course work in phonology and syntax (e.g. case, anaphora, questions, types of intransitive verbs, structure of geminates, stress, vowel harmony, patterning of coronal consonants, reduplication). These papers will be graded on the selection of topic, linguistic insights, organization, completeness of data, and clarity of presentation.

All papers are in class on the Monday specified unless otherwise noted. No work will be accepted after the date it is due except under unusual circumstances. Any work that comes in late will lose a grade (e.g. A become A-, B+ becomes B) for every day that it is late.

Your expenses will be low: you must buy a notebook and something to write with. I prefer to use a large spiral binder; others like to use a bound book. I usually write on only one side of the page. I generally write with pencil (so I can make corrections), but this is an anathema to some, as pencil tends to fade. So you can decide what you wish to write with and what you wish to write in. You should use something bound rather than loose paper, however, simply because it makes it easier to keep your notes in order.

The course fee is $5.00 to be collected on Monday September 25. Please be sure to bring the correct amount with you on that day.

It is important to note that you should **NOT** use library material to supplement in-class data collection. If by any chance you do use library material, they must be strictly and specifically acknowledged, even if you don't refer specifically to what you found there in your paper. The course works best if you do not use library sources; you will tend to find that they either confuse you or shape your thinking such that you cannot see beyond them. I recommend that you stay away from library materials on the language completely.

basic set up
Mondays - discussion
Wednesdays - 2 hour group session
individual elicitation time to be scheduled