

Introduction to Linguistics

(LING E-101, 25752, Spring 2020)

Course overview

Semester and Year: Spring 2020
Day/Times: Wednesdays/6-8pm
Format: On campus (Sever Hall 310)
Special instructions: None

Instructor Contact Information

Name: Teodora Mihoc
Office/Office hours: TBD/Wednesdays 5-6pm, or
by appointment
Email: tmihoc@fas.harvard.edu

Course description and learning objectives To be human is to have language. But what is language? How did we learn to speak? What does it mean to say that we know our language? How are we able to learn languages different from our own? Is language static or in continuous flux? Why should we care if a language dies? What does it take to come up with a new language? Does Alexa know English? In this course we discuss all these questions and more. Students will learn about sounds and sound patterns, words and word patterns, and meaning, as well as about language in the brain, in society, over time, or in machines.

Prerequisites An interest in language and the mind.

Course materials The textbook is the 10th edition of [Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., and Hyams, N. \(2013\). An introduction to language. Cengage Learning.](#) There are multiple editions, and they do differ quite a bit between them, but the 10th edition has been around for quite a while, so you should be able to find not only new but also used versions. The e-book version of the 10th edition works just as well as the hard copy. Any other required course materials will be provided.

Requirements and grading

- 0% Skills check
- 8% Class attendance and participation
- 20% Comments on weekly readings (2 pts. each, 10 total)
- 24% Problem sets (4 pts. each, 6 total)*
- 18% Midterm
- 30% Final

* *For graduate-credit students:* Each problem set counts only for 2 points, for a total of 12%. The remaining 12% can be earned by submitting a short (2,000-2,500 words) research paper. Please meet with me early on to discuss, and then arrange at least two subsequent meetings to track progress.

Classroom policies No laptop use allowed, except for access to course materials or note-taking.

Late policy Reading and problem set assignments for a given week are posted online (on Canvas) on Friday evening of the previous week. Then, reading comments are due online (on Canvas) by Friday at 5pm in the first week and then by Wednesday 5pm in subsequent weeks, and problem sets are due online (on Canvas) by Friday 5 pm. A maximum of one late reading comment and one late problem set can be excused, no questions asked. No other late assignments will be accepted except in exceptional circumstances. All late assignments must be turned in by the Friday before the final.

Exams Material from both the readings and the lecture are all fair game to be tested.

Academic integrity You are welcome to work together on assignments both in and outside of class. You must, however, write up your assignments individually and make note of the names of

any individuals that you worked with. No collaboration is allowed on exams. For more please see the Academic Integrity section of the Harvard Extension School [here](#).

Accessibility and student services The accessibility services office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities, permanent and temporary injuries, and chronic conditions. For more information please consult the Accessibility and Student Services section of the Harvard Extension School [here](#).

Schedule (tentative)

Class	Date	Topic	Readings and problem sets*
1	1/29	What is language?	Readings: [1, Ch. 1]
2	2/5	Morphology: The words of language	Readings: [1, Ch. 2] Problem set
3	2/12	Syntax: The sentence patterns of language	Readings: [1, Ch. 3] Problem set
4	2/19	Semantics and pragmatics: The meaning of language	Readings: [1, Ch. 4] Problem set
5	2/26	Language acquisition	Readings: [1, Ch. 9]
6	3/4	Midterm review	
7	3/11	Midterm Language documentation	
	3/18	<i>No class; Spring Break</i>	
8	3/25	Writing systems	Readings: [1, Ch. 12]
9	4/1	Phonetics: The sounds of language	Readings: [1, Ch. 5] Problem set
10	4/8	Phonology: The sound patterns of language	Readings: [1, Ch. 6] Problem set
11	4/15	Language in society Language change	Readings: [1, Chs. 7-8] Problem set
12	4/22	Language in the brain	Readings: [1, Ch. 10]
13	4/29	Computational linguistics Constructed languages	Late assignments due
14	5/6	Final review and conclusions	
15	5/13	Final	
<i>For graduate-credit students:</i>			
	5/15		Research paper due by midnight

* The readings may be supplemented with additional short articles, and the problem sets are TBD. For any given week, please refer to Canvas for the definitive reading and problem set assignment.

Readings

[1] Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., and Hyams, N. (2013). *An introduction to language*. Cengage Learning.