

Anthropology 412/English 405, Fall 2005

Descriptive Linguistics

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Office hours MW 12:15-1:15

Class time and place MWF 9-9:50am, Tucker 131

Descriptive Linguistics is a course where students and instructor work together to discover the grammar of a language. We begin by trying to discover (and hear) the phonetic categories in the language, transcribing basic vocabulary phonetically and working out a phonemic analysis and practical orthography. We then move on to grammar, with each student responsible for researching and eliciting the key data in some area. Through various assignments, students build toward a final grammatical sketch of the language.

By taking this course, students should learn to:

- a) enter into another language without help from others
- b) discover how a language functions as a system
- c) organize and present data to others

There are few readings for the course, though extensive preparation and analysis are required. You are not allowed to consult outside sources on the target language. We will schedule regular meetings outside of class to plan and compare analyses.

Schedule at a glance (major assignments in *italics*)

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Week and topic
			...	24	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	1 Introduction
Aug.	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	1	2	3	2 Phonetic transcription of basic vocab.
Sept.	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3 Phonetic transcription of basic vocab.
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	4 Phonetics/Grammatical elicitation; <i>List of phones due</i>
	18	19	20	21	22	23	<u>24</u>	5 Grammatical elicitation; <i>First sketch due</i>
	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	1	6 Grammatical elicitation
Oct.	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7 Grammatical elicitation; <i>Second sketch due</i>
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	8 FALL BREAK
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	9 Grammatical elicitation
	23	24	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	10 Grammatical elicitation; <i>Third sketch due</i>
	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	1	2	3	4	5	11 Grammatical elicitation
Nov.	6	7	8	9	10	<i>11</i>	12	12 Grammatical elicitation; <i>Fourth sketch due</i>
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13 Texts/Grammatical elicitation
	20	21	22	23	24	25	<u>26</u>	14 Texts/Grammatical elicitation; THANKSGIVING
	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	1	2	3	15 Texts/Grammatical elicitation
Dec.	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	11	12	<i>13</i>	14	15	...		<i>Final grammatical description due 12/13, 8:30-11:30am</i>

Prerequisites

Currently the only prerequisite is Anthropology/English 220 (Study of Language), but English 304 (Generative Syntax), English 307 (Phonetics and Phonology), and especially Anthropology/English 418 (Language Patterns) are strongly recommended.

Assignments

First sketch:	12%
Second sketch:	12%
Third sketch:	12%
Fourth sketch:	12%
Final grammatical description:	52%

Each sketch builds toward the final grammatical description. The first sketch is a phonological description (including a list of the phonemes in the language, important minimal pairs or near minimal, and discussion of phonological rules). The remaining sketches deal with whatever areas of grammar we've covered. The final grammatical description should include revisions of the previous assignments, a description of items covered since the first grammatical description, a brief lexicon (covering the first few weeks), and an analyzed text.

All your work should be accurate, consistent, clear, precise, thorough, theoretically informed, and insightful.

Some specific areas to explore. Semantic fields for eliciting basic vocabulary:

domestic animals; wild animals; numbers; common names; pronouns (personal, demonstrative, interrogative, etc.); colors; occupations; qualities; illnesses; verbs; machines; weather/celestial; place names; plants/trees; food; clothing; family; household items; body parts

Some grammatical topics:

commands and hortatives; copular sentences (affirmative, negative, yes/no questions, wh-questions); negation; yes/no questions; wh-questions; possession; counting; number and agreement; reflexives and reciprocals; causatives; complement clauses; relative clauses; coordination and clause linking; voice (passive, etc.); tense (present, past, etc.); aspect (progressive, etc.); politeness; nominalization; grammatical relations; word classes; items translating as prepositions in English; topics in phonetics; dialect differences (if there are enough speakers around); intonation