

3224-001
Mon & Wed 1-2:30 pm

Introductory Readings in Language

Dr. Alicia Pousada
Spring 2004

SYLLABUS

Prerequisites: One of the following: English 3103-3104, or English 3011-3012, level 5 on English Department Placement Test, or Advanced Placement in English.

Course Description: Study of selected readings by different authors on the nature of language and the psychological and sociological aspects of communication (3 cr.)

Course Objectives: Upon completing the course, the student will be able to:

- know what linguistics is and what different kinds of linguists do
- contrast human language and animal communication
- identify the major levels of linguistic structure (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse) and the ways in which they are analyzed by linguists as compared to lay people
- understand the differences between standard and non-standard varieties
- evaluate the influence the media have on spoken and written language
- describe how languages change over time and why people worry about this
- comprehend and explain the reasons for language attitudes
- explain why common language myths are incorrect

In addition, the student will be able to:

- contribute in an effective form to the inclusion of fellow students with special needs in the classroom.

Required text:

Bauer, Laurie & Trudgill, Peter. (eds.). 1998. *Language myths*. London: Penguin Books. [hereafter referred to as B & T]

Additional handouts will be provided by the professor and are part of the required readings.

Course requirements and grading policy:

1. Class participation and attendance (25%)

Students are expected to complete assigned readings before each class session and participate actively in class discussions and activities. They are also expected to attend classes regularly in order to obtain the full benefit of the course. Attendance is critical since topics discussed in class may not appear in the readings but will appear on the quizzes and final exam. More than four (4) unexcused absences will result in the lowering of the participation grade by one full letter (e.g. A→B, B+→C+). Absences will only be excused with the presentation of a doctor's note, court appearance ticket, or military orders. Three (3) latenesses will constitute an absence.

2. Quizzes (25%)

Students will be quizzed on the assigned topics to determine comprehension of the basic ideas. There will be six (6) short quizzes based on the class lectures, readings, videos, and audio tapes. Quizzes can only be made up in the case of an excused absence.

3. Homework assignments (25%)

Each student will complete two (2) written homework assignments during the semester. These must be handed in on the dates stipulated, or the grade will be lowered. Assignments should be prepared on computer diskettes (Word, Word Perfect, or plain text) or sent as e-mail attachments to the professor. Work should be done independently, not collectively. Assignments that are significantly similar to those of other students will be returned to be re-done, and the grade will be lowered.

4. Final exam (25%)

Students will be responsible for knowing the terminology and concepts discussed during the semester. A study guide will be provided before the exam so that students know exactly what they should focus on.

Note: Those students who receive services from Vocational Rehabilitation should communicate with the professor at the beginning of the semester to plan the reasonable accommodation and the necessary equipment according to the recommendations of the Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimento (OAPI) of the office of the Dean of Students. In addition, those students with special needs that require some type of assistance or accommodation should communicate with the professor.

Rules of courtesy:

1. Lateness: Students should try not to be late since this disrupts the class, but it is better to be late than to be absent. Late arrivals should seat themselves quickly and unobtrusively.

2. Interruptions: As a matter of courtesy to the professor and fellow classmates, students should silence any cell phones or beepers during class time. If it is necessary to attend a call, students should leave the class as quietly as possible and return promptly in the same manner.

Office Hours:

Dr. Pousada will be available for consultation 11:30 am-1:00 pm and 2:30-4 pm, Mondays and Wednesdays. An appointment is recommended. Her telephone extension is: 2035. Her office is Pedreira 4 (basement). Students should call if they are going to be absent or have a problem or question.

Tentative schedule: (subject to change)

Week

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| 1 (1/21) | Introduction to course—Overview of language and linguistics--Handout on characteristics of language |
| 2 (1/26-28) | Discussion of: Nunberg and Wasow, "An overview" and ERIC Digest "What is linguistics?"--Handout on scope of linguistics
Video—"Human Language: Part 1. Discovering The Human Language: 'Colorless Green Ideas'" |
| 3 (2/2-4) | Discussion of: Handout comparing human language to animal communication
In-class activity on animal communication
Quiz #1: Basic notions of human language |

- 4 (2/9-11) Presentation on phonology and orthography. Handout on IPA symbols.
Discussion of: B & T, Myth 18. Some languages are spoken more quickly than others.
B & T, Myth 20. Everybody has an accent except me.
B & T, Myth 5. English spelling is kattastroffik.
Handout on English spelling

2/16 NO CLASSES--WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

- 5 (2/18) Quiz #2: Phonology and orthography
Presentation on grammar (morphology and syntax)
Handout on common morphemes in English
Handout on syntactic tree diagrams
- 6 (2/23-25) Discussion of: B & T, Myth 4. French is a logical language
B & T, Myth 7. Some languages are harder than others.
B & T, Myth 10. Some languages have no grammar.
B & T, Myth 12. Bad grammar is slovenly.
B & T, Myth 16. You shouldn't say 'it is me' because 'me' is accusative.

2/24 (Tues.) MAKE-UP CLASS--REQUIRED

- 7 (3/1-3) Quiz #3: Grammar (morphology and syntax)
Presentation on semantics
Handout on meaning
Discussion of: B & T Myth 1. The meanings of words should not be allowed to vary or change
- 8 (3/8-10) Assignment #1 due
Presentation on discourse
Handout on discourse analysis
Discussion of: B & T Myth 6. Women talk too much
Audio tape: Deborah Tannen "You just don't understand"
- 9 (3/15-17) Video: "Gender: The enduring paradox"
Discussion of video and origins of discourse differences between men & women
Quiz #4: Semantics and discourse

3/22 NO CLASS--ABOLITION DAY

- 10 (3/24) Presentation of differences between standard and non-standard varieties
Handout on non-standard English forms
Discussion of: B & T, Myth 13. Black children are verbally deprived.
B & T, Myth 14. Double negatives are illogical.
- 11 (3/29-31) Discussion of influence the media have on spoken and written language
Handout on newspaper discourse
Audio tape of TV announcers from different parts of US
Discussion of: B & T, Myth 3. The media are ruining English
B & T, Myth 15. TV makes people sound the same.

4/5-10 NO CLASSES--HOLY WEEK

- 12 (4/12-14) Quiz #5: Standard vs. non-standard and influence of media
 Discussion of how languages change over time and why people worry about this
 Handout showing Old English, Middle English, early Modern English, current English
 Discussion of: B & T, Myth 8. Children can't speak or write properly any more.
 B & T, Myth 9. In the Appalachians they speak like Shakespeare.
 B & T, Myth 21. America is ruining the English language.

4/19 NO CLASSES--DE DIEGO DAY

- 13 (4/21) Assignment #2 due.
 Video: "The story of English #2: The mother tongue"
- 14 (4/26-28) Presentation on language attitudes
 Discussion of: B & T, Myth 2. Some languages are just not good enough.
 B & T, Myth 11. Italian is beautiful, German is ugly.
 B & T, Myth 17. They speak really bad English down South and in NYC
 B & T, Myth 19. Aborigines speak a primitive language.
 Audio tape "Lost for words" on Australian aboriginal languages in danger of extinction
- 15 (5/3-5) Discussion on language attitudes in Puerto Rico
 Quiz #6: Language change and language attitudes
 Video on: Dialects of American English
- 16 (5/10-12) Review for final exam
 Final exam

Bibliography: (additional readings for interested students)

- Aitchison, Jean. (1999). *Teach yourself linguistics*, 5th edition. London: Hodder and Stoughton Educational.
- Campbell, Lyle. (1999.) *Historical linguistics: An Introduction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Crystal, David. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet. (2002). *Language and gender*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Geirsson, Heimir & Losonsky, Michael. (eds.) (1996). *Readings in Language and mind*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Nettle, Daniel & Romaine, Suzanne. (2000). *Vanishing voices: The extinction of the world's languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pepperberg, I. M. (1998). Talking with Alex: logic and speech in parrots. *Scientific American presents: Exploring Intelligence*. Vol. 9 (4), 60-65.
- Torres, L. (2002). *Estrategias de intervención para la inclusión*. Río Piedras Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- Torres, L. (2002). *Asistencia tecnológica derecho de todos*. Río Piedras Universidad de Puerto Rico.

Yaguello, Marina. (1998). ***Language through the looking glass: Exploring language and linguistics***. Oxford: Oxford University Press.