

O. P. Jindal Global University
Spring Semester 2026

Introduction to Linguistics

Cross-elective course, currently taught through
the Centre for Foreign Languages (CFL)
of the Office of English and Foreign Languages (OEFL)

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| <u>Course instructor:</u> | Prof. (Dr.) Sérgio Meira (sergiomdsc.oliveira@jgu.edu.in) |
| <u>Course duration:</u> | 15 weeks |
| <u>Credit hours:</u> | 6 credits |
| <u>Class meeting times:</u> | 2 two-hour sessions per week, Time: TBD |

Course description

As a science, linguistics bridges the gap between the arts (humanities) and the other, ‘soft’ and ‘hard,’ sciences. It concerns itself with the study and analysis of language as a universal human phenomenon and also as instantiated in the various specific languages spoken throughout the world. To this complex phenomenon, it applies the scientific method, in order to gain an understanding of its main features and how they relate, on the one hand, to other aspects of human behavior and cognition, and, on the other hand, to other social phenomena such as culture, religion, and even politics. It covers areas of biology (articulation, memory, brain patterns) as well as language use and even literature (corpus linguistics), cognitive studies (psycholinguistics), sociology and anthropology (sociolinguistics), and history (historical linguistics, linguistic reconstruction).

This course will offer a broad introduction to the field, its most important theories and applications. Starting with phonetics and phonology, we will further explore morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics (the language-culture interface), psycholinguistics, historical linguistics, and even a little philosophy, always with particular attention to the variety and diversity of human languages on this world. The main goal is a general overview leading to some familiarity with the basic concepts and methods of every subfield; interested students will find further reading material to deepen their knowledge and understanding in the list of recommended texts below. Interdisciplinary approaches will be explored to encourage independent research (via e.g. the development of workspaces and web pages relating to course material). As a result, this course should appeal to students of languages, literature, philosophy, history, culture and gender studies, and the humanities, who will become capable of relating and applying the tools of linguistics to their own fields and interests.

Course learning objectives and outcomes

- To acquire familiarity with linguistics as a science in its various subareas (phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics), its object (language), goals, and applications.
- To learn modern approaches to the phenomenon of language itself in its various contexts and to acquire an appreciation for the rich variety and diversity of actual human languages.
- To be able to apply linguistic concepts and methods to specific languages and examples.

- To understand the various social and political interfaces involving languages, both among themselves and in respect to other social processes.
- Students will write short pieces centered mostly around exercises (analyses, examples, puzzles), as well as longer essays on specific topics, to explore and systematize their knowledge and allow them to explain and integrate linguistic issues in their own areas of interest.

Assessment (Grading)

Students will be assigned readings (chapters from the books listed in the course materials) one week in advance, and will be expected to have read them as the class will assume some familiarity with their topic in order to foster deeper and more interesting discussions, in which all students will be expected to participate with their own thoughts, views, and opinions (always in a thoughtful and respectful manner, taking into account different opinions and refraining from uninformed bias or prejudice). Moreover, an attempt will be made to make further discussion possible also online, with the help of specific linguistic websites (to be determined). Student participation in class will count for 20% of the final grade, on a three-level scale (participation = ‘good’, ‘average’, ‘bad’).

Another 20% of the final grade will be derived from written assignments consisting of exercises with specific tasks (e.g., the analysis of a specific example or linguistic phenomenon), to be given out at specific moments during the course for which students will be expected to provide well-argued answers with explanations (usually 300-500 word pieces). Students are expected to return their answers one week after receiving each exercise.

30% of the final grade will come from a 2000-word essay, the topic of which will be chosen by each student and previously accepted by the course instructor. A certain range of possible topics will be proposed after the first half of the course, but students will be free to select other (sufficiently interesting) topics to write about if none of the suggestions appeals to them. The essay will be due by the last day of the course.

The final 30% of the grade will come from an end-of-semester examination with several questions to be answered in writing (500-1000 words), on any of the topics presented in the course (possibly including also exercises). The end-of-semester examination will be administered to the students during the designated examination period.

Given the availability of all kinds of sources and materials on the web, it is important to stress here that plagiarism will not be tolerated. All students are supposed to write their assignments and papers themselves; plagiarism will be severely punished.

Learning resources and materials

The list of books given below defines the maximum extent of the course. The first three books are the most important and will be used most frequently; the others will be used on occasion, when covering specific topics. Book #3 is an interesting short introduction; it is recommended that students read it in full. For the other books, only specific chapters will be covered. The week before a chapter is discussed, all students will receive copies of it and are supposed to read it prior to class, in accordance with the course calendar below. Students with special interest in a given topic are encouraged to read more chapters of the respective books, under the guidance of the course instructor.

The list of websites is meant for exploration of specific topics, and will be used in certain tasks, and as sources of examples, according to task descriptions. Students are encouraged to have a look at them and explore them at their leisure to build up familiarity and also to discover and follow their own interests.

Books:

1. McGregor, W. 2015 (2009). *Linguistics: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury / Continuum.
2. Velupillai, V. 2012. *An Introduction to Linguistic Typology*. John Benjamins.
3. Matthews, P. 2003. *Linguistics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
4. Fromkin, V., et al. 2018. (5th ed.) *An Introduction to Language*. Cengage Learning.
5. Ladefoged, P., & Johnson, K. 2015. (7th ed.) *A Course in Phonetics*. Cengage Learning.
6. Gussenhoven, C., & Jacobs, H. 2017. (4th ed.) *Understanding phonology*. Routledge.
7. Bauer, L. 2003. (2nd ed.) *Introducing Linguistic Morphology*. Edinburgh.
8. Givón, T. 1984. *Syntax: A Functional Typological Introduction*. John Benjamins.
9. Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. 2021. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Wiley Blackwell.
10. Sedivy, J. 2019. *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. Oxford.
11. Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.
12. Cruse, A. 2009. *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. Oxford.
13. Wierzbicka, A. 2013. *Imprisoned in English: The Hazards of English as a Default Language*. Oxford.
14. Wierzbicka, A. 1999. *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, Japanese*. Oxford.
15. Lightbown, P. 1999. *How language are learned*. Oxford.
16. Campbell, L. 2021. (4th edition) *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*. The MIT Press.
17. Hofstadter, D. 1997. *Le Ton Beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language*. Basic books.

Websites:

1. General linguistics website: www.dilbilimi.net/homepage.htm
2. Exploring the languages of the world: www.ethnologue.com
3. References on the languages of the world: www.glottolog.org
4. Interactive IPA chart:
www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/IPAcharts/inter_chart_2018/IPA_2018.html
5. Another interactive IPA chart:
web.uvic.ca/ling/resources/ipa/charts/IPAlab/IPAlab.htm
6. World atlas of language structures (WALS): www.wals.info
7. Some English language corpora:
www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/repository/staff/harrisontilly/corpora-for-workshop
8. Tools for linguistic fieldwork: www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/tools-at-lingboard/tools.php

Course outline (calendar)

| SESSIONS | TOPICS | READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS |
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| 1st week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the course • What is language? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A social phenomenon? - A cognitive phenomenon? - A natural phenomenon? • What is linguistics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linguistics = grammar? science? - Approaches to linguistics: formalism vs. functionalism - Branches of linguistics | <p>Feb. 2: Matthews, Ch. 1 ("The Study of Language")</p> <p>Feb. 4: McGregor, Ch. 1 ("Introduction")</p> <p>Assignment: none</p> |
| 2nd week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonetics and phonology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language sounds and features - Articulation (anatomy): IPA symbols - Acoustics (physics): spectrograms - Structured sounds: phones, allophones, phonemes, and other objects of wonder (phonology) | <p>Feb. 9: McGregor, Ch. 2 ("Sounds of language: Phonetics and phonology")</p> <p>Matthews, Ch. 8 ("Sounds")</p> <p>Feb. 11: Ladefoged & Johnson: Ch. 1 ("Articulation and Acoustics")</p> <p>Optional: Gussenhoven & Jacobs: Ch. 7 ("Connecting underlying and surface representations")</p> <p>Assignment: two problems of phonological analysis (due Feb. 18)</p> |
| 3rd week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morphology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Words: definition - Words: types (the "lexicon") - Word parts and analysis: the elusive morpheme - How complicated can a word be? | <p>Feb. 16: McGregor, Ch. 3 ("Structure of Words: Morphology"); Ch. 4 ("Lexicon")</p> <p>Feb. 18: Bauer, Ch. 1-2 ("Introduction", "The Basic Units")</p> <p>Assignment: two problems of morphological analysis (due Feb. 25)</p> |
| 4th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntax <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word units: phrases, clauses, sentences - Analyzing units: from phrase to sentence syntax - The notion of 'syntactic structure' and higher-level units (discourse) | <p>Feb. 23: McGregor, Ch. 5 ("Structure of Sentences: Syntax")</p> <p>Feb. 25: Fromkin, Ch. 3 ("Syntax: Infinite Use of Finite Means")</p> <p>Assignment: two problems of syntactical analysis (due Mar. 1)</p> |
| 5th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantics I (lexical semantics) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaning: what does it mean to mean? ('No meaning without context') - Word (lexical) meaning: the problem and various solutions (from formal to 'informal' semantics). Case studies: color terms, kinship terms - Sentence- and text-level meaning (case study: 'particles'). | <p>Mar. 1: McGregor, Ch. 6 ("Meaning") (optional) Cruse, Ch. 5-6 ("Introduction to Lexical Meaning", "Contextual Variability of Word Meanings", "Word Meanings and Concepts")</p> <p>Mar. 3: Cruse, Ch. 14 ("Grammatical semantics")</p> <p>Assignment: one problem of semantic analysis and one descriptive task involving data from the student's native language</p> |
| 6th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantics II (semantics and pragmatics) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaning beyond meaning? Pragmatics (case study: Gricean 'rules', presuppositions) - Meaning and cognition: metaphors, "key words" and "different cognitive maps" | <p>Mar. 6: McGregor, Ch. 6 ("Meaning")</p> <p>Lakoff & Johnson, Ch. 1 ("Concepts we live by")</p> <p>Mar. 8: Wierzbicka 2013, Ch. 1 ("Recognizing the contingency of one's own language")</p> |

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| | | <p>Wierzbica 1999, Ch. 1 (“Introduction”), Ch. 6 (“Japanese key words and core cultural values”)</p> <p>Assignment: a task involving either “metaphors” or “key words” from the students’ native language (due Mar. 15)</p> |
| 7th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycholinguistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language in “the mind” - Brain structures related to language - Language and cognition | <p>Mar. 13: Matthews, Ch. 9 (“Language and the brain”)</p> <p>McGregor, Ch. 9 (“Psycholinguistics: Language, the mind and the brain”)</p> <p>Mar. 15: Sedivy, Ch. 3 (“Language and the brain”)</p> <p>Assignment: None.</p> <p>(Mar. 15: Discussion of topics for the 2000-word essay, due Nov. 10)</p> |
| 8th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociolinguistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and society / culture - Language and dialect - Variation and correctness: class, gender, geography, age... - Language structures and socio-cultural structures: a mapping? | <p>Mar. 20: McGregor, Ch. 7 (“Sociolinguistics: language in its social context”)</p> <p>Mar. 22: Wardhaugh & Fuller, Ch. 1 (“Introduction”)</p> <p>Assignment: One task related to variation in the students’ native languages (due Mar. 29)</p> |
| 9th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and identity - Language planning: an ethnogenesis project? - “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy”. Case study: Ukrainian | <p>Mar. 20 & 29: Fromkin, Ch. 7 (“Language in society”)</p> <p>Assignment: None</p> |
| 10th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Acquisition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First-language acquisition: the “holy native speaker” and patterns of growth - Second-language acquisition: “developing a second soul” or “learning a useful skill”? (Patterns of second lang. development: be(com)ing a polyglot) | <p>Apr. 4: McGregor, Ch. 10 (“Language Acquisition”)</p> <p>Apr. 6: Lightbown & Spada, Ch. 1-2 (“Language learning in early childhood”, “Second language learning”)</p> <p>Assignment: one task comparing students’ familiarity with their native language and with their 2nd languages (due Apr. 13)</p> |
| 11th. week Apr. 11 Apr. 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language diversity and linguistic typology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The languages of the world - Synchrony, diachrony, and language types - Greenberg and linguistic universals | <p>Apr. 11: McGregor, Ch. 14 (“Unity and diversity in language structure”)</p> <p>Apr. 13: Velupillai, Ch. 2 (“Typology and universals”)</p> <p>Assignment: one task, applying/checking a universal against a set of languages (due Apr. 20)</p> |
| 12th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Linguistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The tragic problem of language change - Language families (case study: the Indo-European family) | <p>Apr. 18: McGregor, Ch. 15 (“Language Change”)</p> <p>Apr. 20: Campbell, Ch. 1 (“Introduction”)</p> <p>Assignment: one reconstruction exercise, due Apr. 27</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language history: the historical-comparative method and linguistic reconstruction | |
| 13th. week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text and discourse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sentences, texts, and the structure of texts (cohesion, reference, etc.) - From linguistics to literature | Apr. 27: McGregor, Ch. 8 ("Text and discourse") |
| 14th. week 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and philosophy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is language to a philosopher? A roller-coaster trip from Plato to Wittgenstein | (No assigned readings, no assignments: a free philosophical discussion) |
| 15th. week Nov. 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final overview of the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How should language be studied? (Case studies: linguistic fieldwork, corpus linguistics) - How successful is linguistics at studying language? - How can language and linguistic knowledge be applied to other areas of study and research? | (No assigned readings, no assignments: a free general discussion) 2000-word essay due date |
| Reading & Revision Period | | |
| Examination Period | | |