Techniques in Language Documentation

(LING 710)

## Course information

* **Course number:** 84462
* **Instructor:** Bradley McDonnell
* **Time:** T 1:30-4:30
* **Location:** SAKAM A102
* **Email:** [mcdonn@hawaii.edu](mailto:mcdonn@hawaii.edu)
* **Office hours:** W 2-3

## Course description

Contemporary language documentation is dedicated to producing a **long-lasting, multipurpose record of a language**. This course will give you the skills you need to produce such a documentation, with special attention given to digital data collection, data sustainability, and the documentation of language-in-use. The skills you develop in this class can be extended to your future fieldwork or toward bringing an existing documentation project in line with current practice. Students will (1) gain an understanding of the current best practices in digital language documentation; (2) develop skills in a prosody-based transcription system that can be applied to any language; (3) become familiar with key software and hardware used in our field; (4) develop skills to troubleshoot data management problems in a variety of fieldwork situations. By the end of the course, students will be able to plan for conducting best-practice language documentation project of their own, from equipment purchase to data collection to data annotation to archiving and presentation.

## Course readings

The course readings listed below can be accessed through Google Drive. The folder [2020-710](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16VKMCJfY4upj8EiKUjbLk-pFXxL7upXZ?usp=sharing) will be shared with the class during the first week of classes.

Students are required to have (or have access to) the following:

1. Computer (preferably a laptop) \* You can use any operating system (Mac OS, Windows, Linux) except when we are working with FLEx, at which point you will need access to Windows or Linux, either on a PC or through an emulator of some kind.
   * Download the latest stable release of the following:
   * [ELAN (version 5.1)](https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/download/)
   * [FLEx (version 8.3.9)](http://fieldworks.sil.org/download/fw-839/)[[1]](#footnote-27)
   * [SayMore (version 3.1.4)](https://software.sil.org/saymore/download/)

* For certain classes you will need to bring a laptop computer and headphones to class.

1. Closed-ear/closed back (`circumaural’) monitoring headphones

* These headphones will be used with your laptop as well as audio and video recorders.
  + Sennheiser 201, 202 and Audio-Technica ATH-M20 are recommended (Price: $20–$45).
  + It may be possible to check out headphones from the lab or borrow them from a fellow student.
  + Note that earbuds or on-ear (`supra-aural’) headphones are not recommended.
* If students are not already `Advanced Users of the LAE Labs’, please do so before week 4. This will allow you to check out recording equipment. Information on becoming a LAE Labs Advanced User can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/laelabsedit/for-lab-users>.

## Grading

1. Participation & reading responses *20%*

* Students are required to be at every class and participate in class discussions of the readings. When readings are assigned, students need to send one short comment or question about the reading by **8pm the day before the reading is to be discussed**.

1. Assignments *20%*

* There will be several short assignments on the topics being discussed in class.
  1. IRB assignment
  2. Metadata assignment
  3. ELAN assignment
  4. FLEx lexicon assignment
  5. FLEx glossing assignment
  6. ELAN-FLEx-ELAN import export assignment
  7. …

1. Presentations with handout *15%*

* Each student will present on different topics:
  1. Digital data management in language documentation
  2. Hardware/software for language documentation

1. Audiovisual recording & transcription *15%*
   * Each student will make a recording of a conversation of at least 1/2 hour.
     + The recording must use video with a separate audio recorder.
     + The audio and video will be synced, edited and exported for transcription in ELAN.
   * Students will transcribe a small portion of the recording using Discourse Transcription (Du Bois et al. 1993).
2. Documentation enrichment project 30%
   * Enrich a portion of either the documentation of Besemah (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/BJM01>) or Nasal (<https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1079691>). During the third week of the semester students will beginning meeting with me to discuss the areas of the documentation project on which they would like to work. The goal of this project is to give student hands on experience working with documentary materials, using the technical skills that they have learned in this class. Possible projects include the following:
     + Prepare and possibly edit audio and video recordings to be archived in PARADISEC or ELAR.
     + Enrich and organize metadata and consent materials.
     + Edit ELAN files to improve the accuracy of alignment and English free translations.
     + Prepare ELAN files to be imported into FLEx.
     + Export ELAN files into FLEx and gloss different speech events.
     + …

## Presentations

Students are required to do *two* mini-presentations. These are short 10 minute presentations that explain topics to the class in a concise, useful way. The presentation should provide an overview of the topic with illustrative examples that help other students understand how the topic applies to language documentation. Each presentation should be accompanied by a 2 page (single-spaced) handout with relevant information and examples. The handout should serve as a kind of *cheat sheet*.\

## Course Policy

* Attendance in this course is crucial. In order to be successful in the course, you need to attend class and be punctual. That said, if you are sick (and contagious), please do come to class. Excessive absences or tardiness may result in a grade reduction.
* Please do *not* text, check email, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., or work on anything unrelated to class. It can really be distracting for everyone.

## Needs (ADA Statement)

If you have a disability for which you need accommodations in this class or any other special need (e.g. religious holidays), please inform the instructor as soon as possible. The KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612 (voice/text) in room 013 of the Queen Lili‘uokalani Center for Student Services.

## Tentative Course Schedule

The course schedule roughly follows the order (i) preparation, (ii) data collection, (iii) data annotation, (iv) data analysis, (v) data archival, and (iv) data dissemination.

*These readings and due dates are subject to change.*

## References

Du Bois, John W., Stephan Schuetze-Coburn, Susanna Cumming & Danae Paolino. 1993. Outline of discourse transcription. In Jane Anne Edwards & Martin D. Lampert (eds.), *Talking data: Transcription and coding in discourse research*, 45–89. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

1. Please do *not* download the latest version. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)