

Syllabus: EL1101E The Nature of Language
Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies
Semester 2, AY2024-25

Lecturer

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Course Description

This introductory overview of linguistics aims to equip students with a solid foundation in the object, methods and goals of the study of language, the primary tool of human communication. Through a principled analysis of patterns of sound, form and meaning at the levels of word, sentence and text, students will gain insight into what it means to say that language is a rule-governed system and an organic whole. The results of this exploration will be useful to those interested in the relationship between language, mind, society, and culture.

Assessment

Weekly Assignments:	30%
Tutorial Participation:	10%
Individual Essay:	20% (Week 10)
Midterm test:	15% (Week 8)
Final test:	25% (Week 13)

Lectures

- EL1101E is a blended learning course: lectures will be offered online in an asynchronous format, while tutorials will be in person. We hope this will give your schedule more flexibility!
- Lecture videos will be posted on Thursdays by 10 AM in the 'Videos' tab on Canvas. They can be watched at any time.
- Powerpoint and PDF versions of the lecture slides will be posted on Canvas in Files > Lecture slides at the same time as the videos.

Tutorials

- Tutorials will be in person, and will be held from Week 4 to Week 13 (NOTE: Due to Chinese New Year, our normally scheduled first meeting on Week 3 will not be held). Students' attendance at tutorials will factor into the tutorial participation mark.

- In tutorials, we will review the concepts we have learned in the lecture by going through sample problems, reviewing the previous week's assignment, and answering any questions students might have about the material.

Zoom Office Hours and Contacting Us

- Optional live Zoom office hours with Dr. Starr will be held every Friday from 2 PM – 3 PM. On the Zooms, we will be reviewing additional exercises, answering questions, and chatting about linguistics.
- A link to the Zoom is available on the 'Zoom' tab on Canvas.
- Slides from the Zooms with the exercises will be posted in Files > Office Hours.
- Please feel free to email A/P Starr or your tutor at any other time with questions!

Weekly Assignments

- Students will be assigned to small groups within their tutorial class. Groups will work together on the weekly assignments.
- Assignments will be posted at the same time as the lectures (Thursdays at 10 AM) and will be due every Thursday at 10 AM, beginning on Week 5. (NOTE: Due to the Chinese New Year holiday, the due date for Assignment 1 will be delayed by one week, and will be due on Week 5 instead of Week 4. This means that Assignments 1 and 2 will both be due on Week 5.)
- Assignments will be posted and submitted via the Assignment tab on Canvas.
- Answers to the previous week's assignment will be posted on Canvas in Files > Assignments on Thursdays at 2 PM.

Essay

- Students will each write a brief individual essay of 900 – 1,200 words.
- For this essay, you will identify, analyze, and discuss a feature of Singapore English (or another dialect or language of your choice). A selection of possible topics will be given on the assignment information sheet; you may choose some other topic, upon approval from Prof Starr.
- The essay is due on Week 10 on Friday (28 March) at 11:59 PM.
- Additional information on the essay will be given later in the semester.

Tests

- There will be two in-person, closed-book tests for this course: a midterm on Week 8, and a final on Week 13.
- The format of the midterm and final tests will be 100% multiple choice (MCQ).
- The midterm test will cover the topics of Weeks 1 through 6 (the test will cover Syntax I only, not Syntax II). The midterm will be a duration of 60 minutes.
- The final test will cover the material learned over the entire semester and will last for 90 minutes.
- There will be several possible timeslots provided to take the midterm and final tests, because we have no single in-person lecture timeslot. If none of the timeslots work for you, we will arrange a makeup time.
- Additional information on the tests will be given later in the semester.

Readings

- Details of the readings are given in the schedule and reading list at the end of this syllabus.

- PDFs of the readings are all available on Canvas in Files > Readings. On Weeks 2 and 3, please use the links below to access the relevant website. An additional file is provided for Weeks 2 and 3 in the readings folder with links to online resources for phonetics.
- Readings for this course are supplementary materials to help you understand the lecture. If a topic is covered only in the readings and not in the lecture, it will not appear on any assignments or tests.
- There is no compulsory textbook for this course. However, for those who would like a comprehensive textbook (with extra practices), the recommended book is: *The Language Files, 13th edition* (2022) Ohio University Press. An older version of this book is also fine.

Email Announcements

- Important course announcements will be distributed via Canvas. These announcements will include information about assignments, tests, etc. Note that whether you receive course announcements posted on Canvas via email depends on the settings you have in place on Canvas.
- Please do check your school email and the Canvas announcements regularly to avoid missing out on key information.

Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
1	16 Jan	Introduction to Linguistics	Denham & Lobeck (2018) "Questions Linguists Ask"	--
2	23 Jan	Phonetics I: introduction to phonetics, consonants	Russell (2005) "Describing Consonants" (web page)	--
3	30 Jan	Phonetics II: vowels and stress	Russell (2005) "Describing Vowels" (web page)	--
4	6 Feb	Phonology: sound patterns	Language Files (2011) Ch. 3.1-3.3	--
5	13 Feb	Morphology: morphemes and words	Rowe & Levine, (2012) Ch.4	1. Phonetics (delayed due to CNY) 2. Phonology
6	20 Feb	Syntax I: constituents, phrase structure	Fromkin et al. (2014) Ch. 3, pp. 76-87	3. Morphology
recess	--	--	--	--
7	6 Mar	Syntax II: sentence structure	The Language Files (2011) Ch. 5.4-5.5	4. Syntax I
8	13-14 Mar	Midterm Test	--	--
9	20 Mar	Semantics: meaning of words and sentences	O'Grady (2009) Ch. 6.1	5. Syntax II

10	27 Mar	Pragmatics: speech acts, conversational implicature, politeness theory (ESSAY DUE)	Parker & Riley (2010) Ch. 2	6. Semantics
11	3 Apr	Sociolinguistics: language variation and change, language contact, language and justice	McGregor (2009) Ch. 7	7. Pragmatics
12	10 Apr	Psycholinguistics: language acquisition, language in the brain, language and thought	Merrison et al. (2014) Ch. 14, 15.1-15.5	8. Sociolinguistics
13	16-17 Apr	Final Test	--	--

Reading List

(available on Canvas in Files > Readings)

WEEK 1: Denham, Kristin & Lobeck, Anne. 2018. "Questions Linguists Ask." In *Why Study Linguistics*, Kristin Denham & Anne Lobeck (eds.) New York: Routledge. pp. 5-47.

WEEK 2: Russell, Kevin. 2005. "Describing consonants." URL: <https://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~krussll/phonetics/articulation/describing-consonants.html>

WEEK 3: Russell, Kevin. 2005. "Describing vowels." URL: <https://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~krussll/phonetics/articulation/describing-vowels.html>

WEEK 4: Language Files. 2011. File 3.1 – File 3.3. In *The Language Files: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics* 11th ed, Vedrana Mihalicek & Christin Wilson (eds.). Ohio: Ohio State University Press. pp. 103-123.

WEEK 5: Rowe, Bruce M. & Levine, Diane P. 2012. "Chapter 4: The morphological component." In *A Concise Introduction to Linguistics* 3rd ed. New York: Routledge. pp. 89 – 114.

WEEK 6: Fromkin, Victoria, Rodman, Robert, & Hyams, Nina. 2014. "Chapter 3: Syntax: The sentence patterns of language." In *An Introduction to Language* 10th ed. New York: Wadsworth. pp. 76 – 87.

WEEK 7: Language Files. 2011. File 5.4 – File 5.5. In *The Language Files: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics* 11th ed, Vedrana Mihalicek & Christin Wilson (eds.). Ohio: Ohio State University Press. pp. 103-123. pp. 215 – 229.

WEEK 9: O'Grady, William. 2009. "6.1: The Nature of Meaning." In *Contemporary Linguistic Analysis* 7th ed, William O'Grady & John Archibald (eds.) Ontario: Pearson Education Canada. pp. 190-199.

WEEK 10: Parker, Frank & Riley, Kathryn. 2010. "Chapter 2: Pragmatics." In *Linguistics for Non-Linguists* 5th ed. Boston: Pearson. pp. 4 – 25.

WEEK 11: McGregor, William B. 2009. "Chapter 7: Sociolinguistics." In *Linguistics: An introduction*. London: Bloomsbury. pp. 155 – 178.

WEEK 12: Merrison, Andrew John, Bloomer, Aileen, Griffiths, Patrick, & Hall, Christopher J. 2014.
“Chapter 14: Psycholinguistics” and 15.1 to 15.5 in “Chapter 15: Language acquisition.” In *Introducing Language in Use*. pp. 332 – 348, 349 – 363.