

Language Patterns: Types and Universals

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Office hours T 10-11 am or by appointment

Class time and place TR 11-12:20, Tucker 222

Many people learn about grammar from studying another language or from English classes. Few people have knowledge of the languages of Africa, the Americas, or Asia, and even fewer understand how linguists arrive at grammatical analyses. This course provides an introduction to variation in language structure. Each student finds a grammar of an exotic language. We pursue various topics in the course the way a grammar might be organized, from parts of speech to complex sentences. Students will report on features of their chosen languages, and prepare sketches and presentations at the end. Along the way we'll learn how to solve morphology problems and how to write grammatical descriptions.

At the end of this course you will feel more like a linguist: you'll have a better idea of how languages are classified, how they differ, and how linguists describe them. You'll have better insight into the workings of a particular language (based on the grammar you choose). You will understand the history and problems of linguistic terminology, and begin to appreciate some of the issues that distinguish linguists. This course will also prepare you for Descriptive Linguistics, in which students work with an instructor to discover and describe the grammar of a language.

Schedule at a glance (major assignments in *italics*, readings underlined)

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Week and topic
Aug.			...	24	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	1 Introduction
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	2 Fundamentals, <u>Parts of speech</u>
Sept.	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3 Fundamentals; Europe: <u>Czech</u>
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	4 Noun-related phenomena; <i>Find grammar</i> ; <u>Possession</u>
	18	19	20	21	22	23	<u>24</u>	5 Noun-related phenomena; Asia: <u>Chinese</u>
	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	1	6 Verb-related phenomena, <u>Tense</u> ; <i>Exam 1</i>
Oct.	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7 Verb-related phenomena; Africa: <u>Luganda</u>
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	8 FALL BREAK; Verb-related phenomena, <u>Voice</u>
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	9 Verb-related phenomena; Australia/Pacific: <u>Kapampangan</u>
	23	24	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	10 Verb-related phenomena, <u>Serial verbs</u>
	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	1	2	3	4	5	11 The Americas: <u>Guaraní</u> ; <i>Exam 2</i>
Nov.	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12 <i>Presentations</i>
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13 <i>Sketch due</i> ; <u>Grammatical relations</u> ;
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	14 Re-examining the fundamentals, " <u>Universals</u> "; THANKSGIVING
	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	1	2	3	15 Re-examining the fundamentals; Summary
Dec.	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>Final exam: 12/7, 2-5 pm, Tucker 222</i>
	11	12	13	14	15	16	...	

Prerequisites

LING 220/ANTH 204/ENGL 220 is required; English 304 and 307 are helpful.

Detailed schedule (major assignments in *italics*, readings underlined)

Week 1 (8/25). Introduction. Goals and structure of the course.

PART 1. THE FUNDAMENTALS

Week 2 (8/30-9/1). Describing and understanding language; Basic concepts (the word, Parts of speech and phrase categories).

Week 3 (9/6-9/8). Language types in broad strokes (morphological types, ways of tracking arguments, constituent order types); Europe: Czech.

PART 2. NOUNS AND TYPICALLY NOUN-RELATED PHENOMENA

Week 4 (9/13-9/15). Nominalization, Noun compounds, Number; Size, Possession, Pronouns, Demonstratives, Definiteness.

Week 5 (9/20-9/22). Counting, Quantifiers, Noun classes, Case, Discourse markers, Relative clauses; Asia: Chinese.

PART 3. TYPICALLY VERB- AND SENTENCE-RELATED PHENOMENA

Week 6 (9/27-9/29). Tense, Aspect; *Exam 1*.

Week 7 (10/4-10/6). Verb compounds (noun incorporation), Number, Size, Person; Africa: Luganda.

Week 8 (10/11-10/13). FALL BREAK; Negation, Mood, Commands, Questions, Grammatical Voice (on Wikipedia).

Week 9 (10/18-10/20). Location and direction, Transitive/intransitive alternations, Indirect causatives, Applicatives, Existence; Australia/Pacific: Kapampangan.

Week 10 (10/25-10/27). Adverbial clauses, Complement clauses, Combining phrases, Serial verbs.

Week 11 (11/1-11/3). The Americas: Guaraní; *Exam 2*.

Week 12 (11/8-11/10). *Presentations and sketches.*

PART 4. RE-EXAMINING THE FUNDAMENTALS

Week 13 (11/15-11/17). *Sketch due*; Grammatical relations Basic concepts (the word, parts of speech and phrase categories).

Week 14 (11/22-11/24). Constituency and constituent order, “The Myth of Language Universals” (Evans & Levinson); THANKSGIVING.

Week 15 (11/29-12/1). Describing and understanding language; Summary.

12/7. *Final exam, 2pm, Tucker 222.*

Requirements

Homework	15%	(The cumulative grade may be lowered with noticeably poor attendance.)
Midterm exams	35%	
Sketch	15%	
Final exam	35%	

- **Homework** is designed to make sure you are doing the reading, attending, and understanding concepts. They often include problem sets or short descriptions that will form part of your final sketch. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments may be accepted up to one week late, but the grade will be lowered.
- The two **exams** test terminology and ability to do problems.
- The **presentation and sketch** are due in weeks 12 and 13. By the beginning of week 3, you should have located a suitable reference grammar of a language that’s not too close to English (ideally, non-Indo-European). In week 13, you’ll turn in a sketch (10-15 pages, double spaced) based on your source and make a five-minute presentation to the class with a handout. This is a summary paper (like a book review). The point is to summarize the main features of the language (genetic classification, sounds in a chart, constituent order, negation, tense, etc.) and what aspects are expected or unexpected from a crosslinguistic perspective. You should also evaluate your source.
- **Finding a good reference grammar.** A reference grammar describes the rules in a language (the sound system, morphology, syntax, etc.). It’s not the same thing as a textbook, which is designed for someone learning the language (with lessons, etc.).

It can be frustrating trying to think of a language and then seeing if Swem has it. Instead, you might start by seeing what Swem has. You can search for “reference grammar” in the catalog. Alternatively, you can search the stacks: PH=Uralic and Basque; PJ, PL=Asian and Pacific languages; PM=Native languages of North and South America; P901-1091 Extinct ancient languages. You can also sometimes find reference grammars online. Evaluating your grammar. You need to find a source where words are analyzed and glossed, like this (Broadwell 2006:87):

(120) *Hattak-mat im-ofi-Ø-akili-h abi-tok.*
 man-D:NM III-dog-COP-EMPH-TNS kill-PT
 'That man killed his own dog.'

It also helps if the grammar isn't too old (1980s on is usually okay). There should be chapters on possession, relative clauses, negation, etc. Make sure it uses an alphabet that you can read and type.

- The **final** will be cumulative and will concentrate on problem sets and terminology.
- William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at [757-221-2509](tel:757-221-2509) or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see www.wm.edu/sas.

Useful references

- Asher, R. E., ed. in chief. 1994. *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. REF P 29 E48 1994 (10 vols.)
- Crystal, David. 1992. *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell. REF P 29 C68 1992
- Malmkjaer, Kirsten, ed. 1991. *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge. REF P 29 L52 1991
- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax: A guide for field linguists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keeping track of your grade

HOMework	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
a. Total/total possible:	

QUIZZES	
1	
2	
b. Quiz average:	

c. SKETCH	
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d. FINAL EXAM	
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Weighting:

a x .15=	
b x .35=	
c x .15=	
d x .35=	
Sum of above:	

Final grade:

.93-1.00 A
 .90-.92 A-
 .88-.89 B+
 .83-.87 B
 .80-.82 B-
 etc.