LING 520: Descriptive Linguistics  
Spring 2005  
Wednesdays, 7:20-10:00 PM  
Arlington Campus 105B  
Megan J. Kelly

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 6:00-7:00 at Murky/Common Grounds or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
This course is a graduate-level introduction to the complex system all human beings possess – language. We begin by looking in detail at the structure of language’s major components (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics) in order to build a base on which to discuss further linguistic topics – including child language learning, adult (second) language learning, and language variation in social contexts. We will see that languages, while superficially diverse, are fundamentally similar and that there are universal rules governing language. We won’t just be reading about language; there will be many problems to solve with real linguistic data from English and other languages. In addition, we will consider the implications for teaching English as a second language.

REQUIRED TEXT:  

In addition to this textbook, you will also be reading selections from the new PBS series *Do You Speak American?* (http://www.pbs.org/speak/).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:  
- **Participation – 30%**  
  Participation consists of attending class on a regular basis, preparing for class by doing the assigned reading and exercises, and actively engaging in class discussion and activities.

- **Exercises – 10%**  
  Weekly exercises are designed to help you learn about linguistics. The trial exercises, when given, are meant to give you some idea of how to solve a linguistic problem. You are encouraged to work with other students in the class on the exercises, but ultimately, your own individual work should be turned in. Exercise solutions are due at the beginning of class; I will not accept any late assignments.
Exercises are graded with a "check plus" (=3), "check" (=2), or "check minus" (=1). If you do not hand in your exercise solution, you will receive a “zero” (=0). Exercise solutions are evaluated using the following parameters: explicitness, correctness, and originality.

- **Quizzes – 60%**
  Four quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These quizzes will essentially be similar to the weekly exercises; however, you can only consult me if you have questions. The quizzes will be evaluated with a letter grade.

**GRADING SCALE:**
The grading scale for this course is as follows: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, or F.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Learning Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Determine your linguistic IQ</td>
<td>You will introduce yourselves to the class and determine your own attitudes about language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 January</td>
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<td>Download this free software for the course: 1. The phonetic font</td>
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<td>2. Quicktime</td>
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<td>3. Adobe Acrobat Reader</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
<td>Exercise: p. 30 #2</td>
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<td>Discussion Question: p. 32 #9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>What is Linguistics?</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
<td>Exercise: p. 65 #8</td>
<td>The chapter introduces you to the scientific study of language. You will learn about various language myths and facts.</td>
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<td>2 February</td>
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<td>Discussion Question: p. 64 #4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Brain and Language</td>
<td>Ch. 2</td>
<td>Exercise: p. 109 #3; p. 110 #5</td>
<td>You will learn about the biological bases of language and about how the mind is modular in nature.</td>
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<td>9 February</td>
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<td>Trial Exercise: p. 112 #10</td>
<td>You will learn how to identify word classes and how to divide words into smaller parts (morphemes). You will learn the principles of making larger words from smaller words and pieces.</td>
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<td>Morphology</td>
<td>Ch. 3: p. 69-92</td>
<td>Trial Exercise: p. 111 #8</td>
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<td>16 February</td>
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<td>Exercise: p. 112-14 #9, 13, 16</td>
<td>You will learn about the various word-formation processes and the</td>
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<td>Ch. 3: p. 92-107</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
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<td>23 February</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Discussion Question: Present to the class one newly coined word in English. Discuss the morphological process that formed them.</td>
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| 2 March| Quiz 1 Due | Trial Exercise: p. 169 #13  
Exercise: p. 166 #6; p. 168-9 #11, 14, 15  
Discussion Question: p. 166 #3 (discuss one of the sentences) |
| **Week 7** | Syntax | Trial Exercise: p. 167 #7a-d  
Exercise: p. 166 #4; p. 167 #7e-m  
Discussion Question: p. 171 #19 |
| 9 March | | You will learn how to identify and represent different properties of words and how those properties contribute to the structure of phrases and sentences. |
| **Week 8** | Spring Break | |
| 16 March | | You will learn how a finite set of rules can generate an infinite set of sentences. You will learn to identify and describe structural ambiguity, and you will begin to understand the concept of universal grammar. |
| **Week 9** | Semantics | Exercise: p. 224 #3; p. 224 #4; p. 226 #8; p. 228 #17  
Discussion Question: p. 226 #9 |
| 23 March | Quiz 2 Due | You will learn about linguistic meaning at various levels of analysis – the word level and the sentence level. You will understand how context affects meaning. |
| **Week 10** | Phonetics | Trial Exercise: p. 269 #4  
Exercise: p. 268-271 #1, 2, 5, 6, 11  
Discussion Question: Look at the IPA chart (handout). Why are some sounds missing? Specifically, why do you suppose that there are white spaces on the chart? |
| 30 March | | You will learn to describe the articulation of consonants and vowels. You will learn to divide English words into segments and represent them with phonetic symbols. |
| **Week 11** | Phonology | Trial Exercise: p. 335 #12  
Exercise: p. 330 #1; p. 333 #8; p. 331 #4 |
| 6 April | | You will learn how morphemes change their pronunciation in different linguistic environments. You will learn to |
### Week 12
**13 April**
- **Phonology**
  - **Ch. 7:** p. 301-329
  - **Discussion Question:** Ask at least three naive English speakers if the "p" sounds in *pit*, *spit*, and *tiptoe* are the same. Report on their responses.
  - **Trial Exercise:** p. 330 #3
  - **Exercise:** p. 331 #5; p. 332 #7
  - **Discussion Question:** Distinguish between sounds that affect meaning and sounds that don't. You will learn about the atomic features of sounds, and how they are grouped into classes.

### Week 13
**20 April**
- **Language Acquisition**
  - **Quiz 3 Due**
  - **Ch. 8:** p. 341-374
  - **Trial Exercise:** p. 394 #6
  - **Exercise:** p. 395 #9; p. 393 #2
  - **Discussion Question:** Identify the basic English syllable onset constraints (handout). How many X's did you find? How does this result compare to your initial expectations?
  - **Discussion Question:** How do humans acquire language? You will learn the answer to this question from a linguistic standpoint.

### Week 14
**27 April**
- **Language Acquisition**
  - **Ch. 8:** p. 374-391
  - **Exercise:** Second language (L2) handouts
  - **Discussion Question:** You will compare first and second language acquisition. You will consider the question of language ability in non-human creatures.

### Week 15
**4 May**
- **Language in Society**
  - **Ch. 10**
  - **Exercise:** p. 493 #4; p. 494 #8
  - **Discussion Question:** You will learn about some English language varieties, and how they are used and interpreted by speakers and listeners.

**Quiz 4 Due** by 7:00 PM in my office in ROB.