

# TESL 500 Principles of Linguistics

Dr. Robin C. Barr

Fall, 2005

Office hours: Usually after class (Tuesdays after 8 p.m.), and by appointment. Office: McKinley 156  
Phone: 202-885-2582 (TESOL Office, to reach me before class)

## DESCRIPTION:

What do we know when we know how to talk? Normally, using language is as unconscious an activity as walking or chewing gum. This course examines the ways in which the analysis of language reveals a speaker's unconscious knowledge, serving as a "window on the mind."

We will look at data from language use, language learning, and language change in order to discover the underlying principles of language: structures of words (morphology), sounds (phonology), sentences (syntax), and meaning (semantics), as well as their use in context (sociolinguistics) and representation in the mind (psycholinguistics). We will collect, examine, and analyze data from English and a wide variety of other languages.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Weekly problem sets, language journal, 3 "mastery quizzes", combined take-home and 2-hour in-class final examination, assigned readings and films, class attendance and participation.

## GRADING:

8 of the assigned 9 problem sets and class participation	40%
Language journal	15%
Mastery quizzes: 3 @ 5%	15%
Final examination	30%

## COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance and class participation are considered in your grade: what goes on in class is crucial for understanding the content of this course. All course work is subject to the standards and procedures of the University Academic Integrity Code. All work must be one's own unless appropriate collaboration has been approved in advance. Collaboration with class members on problem sets is encouraged (i.e., discussion of how to solve the problems); however, the write-ups must be done individually (i.e., no copying someone else's solution). Similarly, you may work together on the exam preview questions. I also encourage you to discuss journal entries with each other, but of course will not accept duplicate entries.

## READING:

The syllabus lists basic readings for each unit from the following textbooks which were ordered at the campus bookstore. More specific assignments, plus a few additional readings (chapters on reserve at the library, or from the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of CER) will be given out in the weekly reading list. There is also a photocopied Workbook which will be ready for you to buy next class. It contains problems, class handouts, hints on solving the problems, and other useful information. You should bring this each week, since we will often use materials from it in class.

### Required:

- Bauer, Laurie and Peter Trudgill, eds. *Language Myths* (1998). Penguin. (Myths)
- Clark, Eschholz, and Rosa. *Language: Introductory Readings in Language and Culture* (1998). 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (CER)
- Fromkin & Rodman. *An Introduction to Language* (1998). 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (F&R)
- Pinker. *The Language Instinct* (2000). Harper Perennial. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Pinker)
- Workbook -- available in class for about \$5 (required).

### Optional:

- Crystal. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (1997). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press (recommended).
- Trudgill. *Sociolinguistics* (1995). 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Penguin (recommended).

### **PROBLEM SETS:**

Problem sets are assigned each week, to be turned in during class the following week. These problems are the core of the exploratory, inductive method used in this course. They involve collection and analysis of linguistic data, short essays on the readings, and preparation for class discussion. There are 9 assignments in all, graded SAT/UNSAT; I will pick your best 8 for course credit. You should turn in the other problem set if you want my comments, but you will not get additional credit for doing so.

Many of these problems are challenging, and involve concepts you have not encountered before, but do *not* be alarmed! Remember that these assignments do not receive a letter grade. The problems are intended to introduce you to phenomena that we will be discussing later. They are not intended to grade you on what you have already learned — that's what the exam and quizzes are for. You do not have to get *the* right answer, but you do have to make a satisfactory effort to explore and work through the data so you will be able to follow the class discussion. Late or incomplete assignments may not receive full credit, but should be turned in anyway for partial credit.

You should collaborate with other members of the class in figuring out the problems, then write up and turn in your own assignment separately. I require students to cooperate on these assignments because I have found that cooperative learning improves students' performance not only on the problems, but also on the tests. You need not meet in person — I realize that most of you have tight schedules, and many of you live outside the local area. You may instead discuss the problems by e-mail or telephone. Students have found it more useful to work through the problems together and argue about the answers, rather than just to check their answers after the fact. I prefer that you do not always work with the same people, so I may mix you up occasionally.

Students often ask what is the best way to approach the weekly assignments: to do the problems or the reading first? I recommend trying the problems first, as often the readings in Fromkin & Rodman (in particular) are easier to understand once you have encountered the phenomena they are discussing. The readings listed on the syllabus are not usually prerequisites for doing the problems; they just correlate with the topics of that week. You can check back and forth with the relevant readings as you go. But if you find yourself baffled by a particular problem and making no progress for more than ½ hour, you should stop banging your head against the wall and call me or a classmate — especially if you do not understand what you are supposed to do, or where to start. None of these problems are intended to be tricky or difficult, but I may not have been clear enough in my instructions, or there might be typos. So let me know right away!

### **JOURNALS:**

This is your opportunity to use your new knowledge of linguistics in your everyday life. Collect at least 10 pieces of linguistic data over the course of the term, and write a brief (half-page) analysis of why they are linguistically interesting. Choose 5 of these for a longer write-up (total about one page), adding a further discussion that illustrates how what you have learned in this class enables you to interpret or understand better what is going on. We will discuss them in class at the end of the term. Examples from previous classes, data sources (e.g. Linguistics in the News), and further instructions can be found in your *Workbook*. The finished journals are due on Tuesday, December 13.

### **EXAMS:**

There will be three short (1/2 hour or so) quizzes, and a final examination. The quiz dates given on the syllabus are approximate — they will be given when I think you are ready, and will be announced in advance. Sample quizzes can be found in the *Workbook*. The take-home portion of the final will be handed out on Tuesday, December 13, and the in-class portion will be given on Tuesday, December 20 from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.

### **REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

Make liberal use of the glossary in the back of Fromkin & Rodman. There are also reference dictionaries and encyclopedias in the P29 call number area of the AU Library Reference collection. Some particularly useful titles are:

#### **DICTIONARIES:**

Crystal, David (1992). *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*. (P29.C68)

Pei, Mario (1966). *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology*. (P29.P39)

#### **ENCYCLOPEDIAS:**

Bright, William, Editor-in-Chief (1992). *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, 4 vols. (P29.I58)

Asher, R.E., Editor-in-Chief (1994). *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 10 vols. (P29.E48)

## TESL 500 Principles of Linguistics

Dr. Robin C. Barr

Fall 2005 SYLLABUS

### **Unit I. The Study of Language**

Current questions in linguistics: What is language? How is language learned, organized, and used? What are the formal and functional characteristics of human language? What are our synchronic and diachronic sources of linguistic evidence? What does the study of language reveal about the mind?

**Aug. 30** Readings: F&R Chapter 1; CE&R Article 5; Pinker Chapters 1-2

**Aug. 31** COME TO THE TESOL OPENING RECEPTION, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 4:30-5:30!

### **Unit II. The Structure of Words (Morphology)**

Morphological and morphophonemic rules. Child morphology: the wug-test. Analogical change.

Films: "Colorless Green Ideas," "Out of the Mouths of Babes."

**Sept. 6** Readings: F&R Ch. 3; CER 11-12; Pinker Ch. 5; Ohio morphology files. Problem Set 1 due.

**Sept. 13** Readings: F&R Ch. 8; CER 41-44, 46; Pinker Ch. 9; Myths 5, 10, 19. Problem Set 2 due.

### **Unit III. The Structure of Sounds (Phonology)**

Writing systems. Phonetic transcription, the psychological reality of the phoneme, phonological rules and features, sound change and reconstruction, child phonology.

**Sept. 20** Readings: F&R Ch. 6, 12; CER 51; Halle article; Myths 1, 9, 21. Problem Set 3 due.

**Sept. 27** Readings: F&R Ch. 7; Ohio phonology files, Myths 4, 12, 16. Problem Set 4 due.

**Oct. 4** Readings F&R Ch. 11; CER 30-34, Pinker Ch. 8. Myths 2, 7, 11. Phonetics Quiz.

**Oct. 11** **FALL CLASS BREAK -- NO CLASS**

**Oct. 18** Readings F&R Ch. 9; Pinker Ch. 6, Chomsky article. Problem Set 5 due.

### **Unit IV. The Structure of Sentences (Syntax)**

Phrase-structure and transformational grammars, learnability and syntactic universals.

**Oct. 25** Readings: F&R start Ch. 4; CER 15-16. Myths 14, 18. Problem Set 6 due.

**Nov. 1** Readings: F&R finish Ch. 4; Pinker Ch. 4, 7; Heny article. Phonology quiz.

**Nov. 8** Readings: CER 7-9, 49; Heatherington article; Chaika article. Problem Set 7 due.

### **Unit V. The Structure of Meaning (Semantics and Discourse)**

Language and thought. The lexicon, acquisition of categories, semantic bootstrapping, pragmatics.

**Nov. 15** Readings: F&R Ch. 5; CER 25-27, 47; Pinker Ch. 3; Myths 3, 6, 8. Problem Set 8 due.

### **Unit VI. Language in Context**

Use of language in culture and society. Gender and power. Dialectology and sociolinguistics.

Film: "American Tongues" or "Yeah, you rite!"

**Nov. 22** Readings: F&R Ch. 10; CER 19-24, 52; Pinker 12; Myths 13, 15, 17, 20. Syntax quiz.

**Nov. 29** Readings: CER 45, 55; Eimas article. Problem Set 9 due.

### **Unit VII. The Structure of Language**

Language and the brain, language disorders. Innateness, critical periods, species-specificity.

**Dec. 6** Readings: F&R 2; Pinker 10, 11, 13; Gardner article. Discussion of Journals.

**Dec. 13** Final exam preview and take-home questions distributed. Journals due

**Final Examination: Tuesday, December 20, 5:30 - 8 p.m.**