

Linguistics 5301: Principles of Linguistic Analysis
Fall '23

Professor: Nicholas Sobin; njsobin@utep.edu

Office & hours: LART 216; M T R 2-3 p.m. and by appt.; 747-6555

Text: Schane, Sanford. *Generative phonology*. (On reserve or buy on-line)

Sobin, Nicholas. *Syntactic analysis: The basics*.

General description: This course deals with some of the foundational ideas underlying research in phonology, morphology, and syntax, in preparation for more advanced work in these areas. Thinking in these areas is constantly evolving. In some instances, ideas that were abandoned earlier are resurrected in later work. Further, terminology from earlier versions of a theory are sometimes still employed, despite the fact that the theory has moved on. So knowledge of earlier foundational analyses can be key to fully understanding more recent research.

One key question about the character of human language sets the tone for the whole study. The question is this: How large is a human language? If by a 'human language' we mean the sentences/utterances that are possible in that language (e.g. the Spanish language is all that stuff that sounds like Spanish, etc.), then every human language is infinitely large. So, it must be that when children 'learn a language', what they really do is to learn its 'grammar'--a finite system of computation which can (re-)produce/give access to the sentences of this infinitely large language. Following this line of thinking, three further questions central to linguistics are these: (i) how are human language grammars structured (that is, what are the elements involved and what are the rules of their combination); (ii) how does a child learn the grammar of a human language; and (iii) are there elements or rules of this grammar which are pre-programed/hard-wired? Linguistic theory seeks to answer these questions.

These subsystems are not only of considerable interest in their own right, but also relate strongly to work in other areas such as sociolinguistics, bilingualism, speech pathology, cognitive psychology, computer science (computational linguistics/natural language processing), discourse analysis, and language pedagogy, both native and foreign. So there is a potentially large benefit to understanding these subsystems of human language grammar.

This course is a graduate-level introduction to linguistic analysis concerning the subsystems of phonetics (sounds themselves), phonology (pronunciation systems), morphology (word structure), and syntax (sentence structure). Of course, each of these is a very large area, and a single course could not do comprehensive justice to one of them, much less to all of them. However, there are some fundamental aspects of each that are essential to the further study of these areas, and it is these fundamentals which we will deal with here. The phonetic analysis of any human language deals with the nature of sounds. Phonological analysis deals with how sounds are modified in the presence of other sounds. Morphology deals with the structuring of complex words, words formed from smaller meaningful elements. Syntactic analysis deals with the various dimensions of sentence formation, including aspects of semantics. These are core

areas of what we might term *linguistic competence*—the ability of a speaker to produce and understand any of infinitely many possible sentences available in a human language.

Learning outcomes: In completing this course, you should acquire

- knowledge of important terms, ideas, and structural concepts in phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax;
- the ability to operate linguistic analyses in these areas;
- an understanding of the principles of linguistic analysis; motivations for preferring a particular analysis, essential to research and the advancement any theory.

Course format: The course involves readings, lectures, discussion, problem-solving, and examinations. Your questions, observations, and ideas are very important for understanding this material. At times, you may be asked to ‘draw up’ (present) and/or discuss analyses. Everyone is expected to contribute to this aspect of the course. In addition to the normal class meetings, please take advantage of office hours for any further questions you might have or topics/ideas you might want to discuss.

Grade: The grade for the course will be based on three exams: the first covers phonetics and phonetic features (Part I of Schane) (15%), and will be given approximately at the end of the third week; the second covers phonology (Part II of Schane) (30%), and will be given as a mid-term exam; the third covers syntax (45%), and will be given at the end of the semester. There is also a portion of the mark (10%) reserved for participation in class discussions and exercises. The exact date of each exam will be announced later. Problems will be assigned for discussion and presentation in class. Regular attendance is expected. As indicated in the Graduate Catalog, absences constituting more than three class hours may result in a reduced or failing grade, or a drop, at the discretion of the professor.

Sketch of Exam contents:

- Exam 1: define key phonetics terms;
 give 'traditional' phonetic features for given Vs and Cs;
 fill in binary values for key features of certain Vs and Cs
- Exam 2: define key phonological terms;
 discuss of allophonic vs phonemic status of two candidate sounds;
 do derivations with phonological rules;
 solve a problem in phonology;
 possible review of phonetic features
- Exam 3: define key syntactic terms;
 operate tests of constituency;
 do transformational derivations of given sentences, including syntax-
 based semantics; recap a syntactic argument for one syntactic hypothesis over

another

Proposed topics/activities calendar (subject to alteration as time and circumstances dictate):

Wk 1 Intro; Schane Ch 1 (the segment)

Wk 2 Schane Chs 2-3 (phonological patterns; distinctive features)

Wk 3 Schane Ch 4 (redundancy); Exam 1

Wk 4 Schane Chs 5-6 (phonological processes; phonological rules)

Wk 5 Schane Chs 7-8 (underlying representations; ordered rules)

Wk 6 Schane Chs 9-10 (derived representations; nonphonological effects)

Wk 7 Review; Exam 2

Wk 8 Sobin Chs 1-2 (doing linguistic science; the structure & classification of words)

Wk 9 Sobin Chs 3-4 (sentence structure; phrase structure rules)

Wk 10 Sobin Chs 5-6 (assigning meaning in sentences; category-neutral processes)

Wk 11 Sobin Chs 7-8 (; pronoun reference; complex verb forms)

Wk 12 Sobin Chs 9-11 (abstract structure; generalizing syntactic rules)

Wk 13 Sobin Chs 12-13 (WH movement & NP movement)

Wk 14 Sobin Ch 14 (aspects of current theory)

Wk 15 Review/consultation; Exam 3

Disability Statement:

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.utep.edu/CASS.