

Linguistics 201 : Introduction to Linguistic Theory

Spring 2003, Campbell A5

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Prof. Alan Prince

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LINGUISTICS investigates the structural properties of human language. A principal goal of multidisciplinary cognitive science is to understand how the mind acquires, configures, and processes linguistic knowledge. Linguistic theory aims to specify precisely what that knowledge is.

In this course, we focus primarily on syntax and phonology, with side-glances at morphology (the structure of words) and semantics (interpretation, as it interacts with form).

Syntax is concerned with the organization of phrases and sentences. Topics to be addressed include constituency, headedness, X-bar theory, argument structure, local and nonlocal dependencies, anaphora and co-reference, all viewed from a universalist perspective that seeks to delimit narrowly the ways that languages can differ. We will base much of the discussion on the analysis of English, but we will also be looking at patterns in other languages that illuminate or challenge the hypotheses we explore.

Phonology deals with the sound structure of language: not just the repertory of sounds themselves, but how they are restricted, organized into a hierarchy of phonological constituents, and subject to contextual influence and modification. Phonology connects with word structure, determining and being determined by it. Phonology also connects with syntax, both abstractly (in sharing structural resources and mechanisms) and concretely (in providing the means by which syntactic form is realized physically). We focus on modern developments in the theory that show how universal principles can interact to produce the range of language particular effects.

Course work will consist most prominently of assignments that are largely analytical in character, applying and extending ideas and techniques introduced in class.

Requirements.

- Attendance and Participation. Much of the course material is not readily available in any one source, so it is crucial that students be present to absorb it through lectures and in-class discussion.
- Homework. Approximately weekly. Homework must be done and turned in on time. Late work is not welcome. Staple & number your pages. Word-process if at all possible.
- Readings. As appropriate.
- Quizzes. As needed.
- Mid-term, final.

Office Hours. T W 11-12, and by appointment.