# Field Methods of Linguistics / Linguistic Field Research

LING 415 / LING 610 — Winter 2019

T, Th 10:05–11:25, Linguistics 117[1]

## Instructors

|  | **Jessica Coon** |
| --- | --- |
| *email* | jessica.coon@mcgill.ca |
| *office* | 1085 Dr. Penfield, 221 |
| *office hours* | Th 1:30–3:00, and by appt. |

**Language consultant — Vololona Razafimbelo**

## Content of the course

The primary goals of this course are for students to learn how to collect and analyze reliable and accurate language data through direct work with a native speaker of a particular language—here Malagasy—as well as to gain practice in formulating and testing linguistic hypotheses. In doing this, students will also learn about topics in fieldwork ethics and in linguistic typology; will create a collaborative language database; as well as learn about topics specific to the grammar of the language at hand. Students will gain practice presenting their findings and supporting proposals with linguistic data.

## Requirements and evaluation

We will investigate the above topics through a combination of readings, short-assignments, in-class discussion, group work, and—most importantly—active work with a language consultant. The evaluation break-down is as follows:

|  | LING 415 | LING 610 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| short assignments | 55% | 35% |
| participation (in-class plus blog posts) | 15% | 15% |
| final paper & presentation | 35% | 55% |

### Participation in in-class sessions

This class is a workshop, not a lecture, and active participation in class and in your group is absolutely essential to its—and your!—success. Participating in class means asking questions, contributing ideas, and taking careful notes. After the add/drop deadline (January 21), the class will be divided into 6–7 small groups. These groups will meet together with the language consultant during the out-of-class sessions, and will be responsible for planning and guiding elicitations for certain in-class sessions (see schedule below). While certain groups will be responsible for guiding our elicitation on any given meeting, *everyone should be participating actively in all class sessions*.

Note: "Participating in class discussion" does not mean that you have completely followed and understood everything, or that you are saying things that are "right". Rather, participating is about actively engaging, moving the discussion forward, and has nothing to do with being "right" or "wrong". Often the best way to move a discussion forward is to ask questions—even (or maybe especially) questions for which you worry the answers might be obvious.

---

[1]Beginning Week 4, Thursday's class will finish at 10:55am for LING 415 students and the out-of-class elicitation schedule will begin; schedule details TBA.

**Participation in out-of-class sessions**

Groups will meet regularly with the consultant outside of class beginning in Week 4. Attendance and participation in these 50-minute sessions is mandatory; the extra time will be offset by reduced Thursday meeting time for 415 students. These out-of-class sessions are designed to allow you to get more direct elicitation time, delve deeper into certain topics, and to develop independent projects. After each out-of-class session, your group is responsible for making a short blog post with notes about what you did and any highlights from the session.

**Class blog and database**

**Database:** In order to organize the Malagasy language material collected both in and outside of class, we will have a password-protected class database (app.dative.ca). It is your responsibility to ensure that all data you elicit is entered into the database. Because we are learning about the language as we go along, the database will contain errors, mistake, and there will be parts that we don't understand. Nonetheless, it is crucial that all information is kept in a single shareable location so that we have a record of our progress.

**Blog:** The database will help us organize our data, and the blog will be our forum for discussing it. The blog can be used to highlight interesting data you have found; to discuss working hypotheses; and to ask questions or solicit advice from classmates. Your regular blog posts (roughly one/week, beginning in week 4), to be discussed more in class, are an important part of your participation grade.

**Leading elicitation**

Together with your group, you will be responsible for leading in-class elicitation for one week during the semester, either on the topic assigned for the week, or on a modification of the topic mutually agreed upon by the class. This will involve completing the reading for the week and coming up with a plan for material to elicit. You will submit your plan by email to me (1–2 pages, including specific example sentences), the preceding Thursday by 5pm. Your group will be responsible for ensuring that the online database is up-to-date with the material elicited in class that week.

## Assignments and late policy

Over the course of the semester, you will have 5 assignments to turn in, the latter two relating to your final project. These assignments are due on MyCourses in PDF format **at 5pm on the date listed** (**Tuesdays**). You have one free late-pass which you may use to turn in one of your assignments 24 hours late. Once this pass has been used, late work cannot be accepted for grades without a documented medical excuse.

## Final paper and presentation

You will be asked to write a final paper on a topic in the grammar of the language of your choosing (in consultation with us). Final papers are due April 20th, and will be discussed further in class. Reasonable requests for extensions will be considered, but should be made in advance of the due date. You will give a short presentation on your chosen topic the last week of class (schedule TBA).

## Readings

There are two books for this course, available at the McGill bookstore (and on reserve in the library):

- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

We will read most of the Payne book, which will familiarize you with linguistic typology, discuss what kinds of questions we need to ask, and provide background and structure to our class elicitation sessions. The topics for each given week may serve as the topic for elicitation, or we may decide to modify topics as needed.

Though there are general good practices for conducting field work, there is no magic formula. In this class we will learn by doing, and on the whole we will not devote much in-class time to discussing the assigned readings on fieldwork methodology. Nonetheless, there are a number of good resources on the topic, and many of the course readings are intended to give you a sense for some of the issues we will want to keep in mind as we go along. Your responsibility is to complete the reading before coming to class. Altogether, you can expect to read approximately 2–3 articles or chapters per week.

## Class policies and university regulations

### General respect and use of electronics

Classroom dynamics affect all of us. While vigorous discussion and conflicting opinions are always welcome, personal attacks, disrespectful comments, or sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or other discriminatory remarks are not tolerated. Since disruptive behaviours are not always explicit and immediately apparent, all are encouraged to think critically and self-reflexively about listening and communication strategies and to take responsibility for group dynamics, in order to create an environment conducive to respectful dialogue.

Electronic devices may be used for taking notes and accessing information directly related to class content. Out of respect for the group, electronic devices should not be used for any other purposes.

### Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

### Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

### Territory acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

# Course outline (readings subject to modification)

| date | topic & readings: □ = required, ☆ = recommended, ☑ = 610 required/415 optional | due |
|---|---|---|
| **Week 1** 1/7 | **Introduction** □ - Bowern (2008), ch. 11 – *Ethical field research* ☆ - Rice (2001) – *Learning as one goes* | (assn. 1 posted) |
| 1/9 | □ - Bowern (2008), chs. 1 & 3 – *Introduction* ☆ - Leonard (2017) – *Decolonising 'language'* ☆ - Macaulay (2004) – *Training students for the realities of linguistic fieldwork* | |
| **Week 2** 1/14 | **Phonology** □ - Meakins, Turpin, and Green (2018) – *Introduction* ☆ - Ladefoged (2003), chs. 5–6 (review as needed) | ✎1 – transcription |
| 1/16 | □ - Meakins et al. (2018), ch. 5 – *Phonetics & Phonology* ☆ - Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) – *Community engagement* | |
| **Week 3** 1/21 | **Phonology, cont.** □ - Bowern (2008), ch. 5 – *Phonetics and phonology* ☆ - Ladefoged and Johnson (2011) - (review as needed: ch. 1; Part III) | (assn. 2 posted) |
| 1/23 | □ - Bowern (2008), ch. 6 – *Eliciting basics* ☆ - Mithun (2001) – *Who shapes the record?* | |
| **Week 4** 1/28 | **Phonology & Morphology** □ - Meakins et al. (2018), ch. 6.1–6.6 – *Morphosyntax* ☆ - Rice (2006) – *Letting the language tell its story* | ✎2 – phonology |
| 1/30 | □ - Matthewson (2004) – *Methodology of semantic fieldwork* | |
| **Week 5** 2/4 | **Typological overview** □ - Payne (1997), chs. 0–3 – *Describing morphosyntax* ☑ - Keenan and Ochs (1987, secs. 1–3) – *Becoming a competent speaker of Malagasy* | |
| 2/6 | □ - Vaux and Cooper (2003), ch. 11 – *Syntax* ☑ - Keenan and Polinsky (1998) – *Malagasy* | group 1 elicitation plan |
| **Week 6** 2/11 | **Group 1: Constituent order** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 4 – *Constituent order typology* | (assn. 3 posted) |
| 2/13 | ☑ - Pearson (to appear) – *Predicate raising and perception verb complements* | group 2 elicitation plan |
| **Week 7** 2/18 | **Group 2: NPs** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 5 – *Noun and NP operations* | ✎3 – morphosyntax |
| 2/20 | ☑ - Paul (2016) – *When bare nouns scope wide* | group 3 elicitation plan |
| **Week 8** 2/25 | **Group 3: Predicate nominals** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 6 – *Predicate nominals* | |
| 2/27 | ☑ - Pearson (2005) – *The Malagasy subject as an A'-element* | group 4 elicitation plan |
| **Week 9** 3/10 | **Group 4: Grammatical relations** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 7 – *Grammatical relations* | (assn. 4 posted) |
| 3/12 | ☑ - Guilfoyle et al. (1992) – *Two subjects in Austronesian languages* | group 5 elicitation plan |
| **Week 10** 3/17 | **Group 5: Voice and valence** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 8 – *Voice and valence operations* | ✎4 – paper proposal |
| 3/19 | ☑ - Travis (2005) – *States, abilities, and accidents* | group 6 elicitation plan |
| **Week 11** 3/24 | **Group 6: Other VP operations** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 9 – *Other verb and VP operations* | (assn. 5 posted) group 7 elicitation plan |
| 3/26 | ☑ - Pearson (2012) – *Aspect and voice selection in Malagasy* | |
| **Week 12** 3/31 | **Group 7: Pragmatically marked structures** □ - Payne (1997), ch. 10 – *Pragmatically marked structures* | ✎5 – revision+peer review |
| 4/2 | ☑ - Paul (2001) – *Concealed pseudoclefts* (see also Potsdam 2006) | |
| **Week 13** | **Class presentations (schedule TBA)** | **Final papers due April 20th** |

# Readings

Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Czaykowska-Higgins, Ewa. 2009. Research models, community engagement, and linguistic fieldwork: Reflections on working within Canadian Indigenous communities. *Langauge Documentation and Conservation* 3:15–50.

Guilfoyle, Eithne, Henrietta Hung, and Lisa Travis. 1992. Spec of IP and spec of VP: Two subjects in Austronesian languages. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 10:375–414.

Keenan, Edward L., and Elinor Ochs. 1987. Becoming a competent speaker of Malagasy. In *Languages and their speakers*, ed. Timothy Shopen, 113–158. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Keenan, Edward L., and Maria Polinsky. 1998. Malagasy (Austronesian). In *The handbook of morphology*, ed. Andrew Spencer and Arnold M. Zwicky, 563–623. Blackwell Publishers.

Ladefoged, Peter. 2003. *Phonetic data analysis: An introduction to fieldwork and instrumental techniques*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ladefoged, Peter, and Keith Johnson. 2011. *A course in phonetics*. Wadsworth Publishing, 6th edition.

Leonard, Wesley Y. 2017. Producing language reclamation by decolonising 'language'. In *Language documentation and description*, ed. Wesley Y. Leonard and Haley De Korne, volume 14, 15–36. London: EL Publishing.

Macaulay, Monica. 2004. Training linguistics students for the realities of fieldwork. *Anthropological Linguistics* 46:194–209.

Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369–415.

Meakins, Felicity, Myfany Turpin, and Jennifer Green. 2018. *Understanding linguistic fieldwork*. London: Routledge.

Mithun, Marianne. 2001. Who shapes the record: the speaker and the linguist. In *Linguistic fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff, 34–54. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Paul, Ileana. 2001. Concealed pseudo-clefts. *Lingua* 111:707–727.

Paul, Ileana. 2016. When bare nouns scope wide: The case of Malagasy. *Natural Langauge and Linguistic Theory* 34:271–305.

Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Pearson, Matt. 2012. Aspect and voice selection in Malagasy. In *Theories of everything*, volume 17, 337–347. UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics.

Pearson, Matthew. 2005. The Malagasy subject/topic as an A′-element. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 23:381–457.

Pearson, Matthew. to appear. Predicate raising and perception verb complements in Malagasy. *Natural Langauge and Linguistic Theory* .

Potsdam, Eric. 2006. More concealed pseudoclefts and the clausal typing hypothesis. *Lingua* 116:2154–2182.

Rice, Keren. 2001. Learning as one goes. In *Linguistic fieldwork*, ed. Paul Newman and Martha Ratliff, 230–249. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rice, Keren. 2006. Ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork: an overview. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4:123–155.

Travis, Lisa deMena. 2005. States, abilities, and accidents. In *Proceedings of the Canadian Linguistics Association*, ed. Claire Gurski.

Vaux, Bert, and Justin Cooper. 2003. *Introduction to linguistic field methods*. Muenchen: LINCOM Europa.