

## Linguistic Fieldwork

*Teacher:*

What is the highest technique you hope to achieve?

*(character played by) Bruce Lee:*

To have no technique.

from *Enter the dragon*

### Course description

This class provides a survey of methodological issues involved in doing linguistic fieldwork, or working with speakers or signers of a language, particularly one that a linguist does not speak natively. Unlike a traditional field methods class, where class participants practice working with a speaker, in this class we will talk about how to do that more abstractly.

### Syllabus

1. week 1 (Jan 3) Overview of class

Set tentative dates for guest lectures. Video clips from *Songcatcher*.

2. week 2 (Jan 11 or 12) Getting organized for fieldwork

Reading to discuss: Newman and Ratliff, 2001c, Himmelman, 2006, Dwyer, 2006

Show and tell: eGC1 and HS forms at UW.

3. week 6 (Feb 5) Field notes and recordings

Reading to discuss: Kerswill and Wright, 1990, Austin, 2006, Schultze-Berndt, 2006

(please also read, but we will discuss only if time permitting: Seifart, 2006, Mithun, 2001)

Assignment due: an annotated bibliography on some topic in the phonology, morphology or syntax in some language (should contain paragraph length synopses of at least 3 references). In general, the longer your bibliography, the better. If you were doing this for real, it should be exhaustive. Bring your bibliography to class and be prepared to discuss it.

Show and tell: Sharon's field notes and field equipment over the years; Julia's video equipment.

4. week 7 (Feb 12) Eliciting data

Video clip from *Ball of fire*.

Reading to discuss: Everett, 2001, Gil, 2001, Mosel, 2006b, Hill, 2006, Himmelmann, 1998

Show and tell: Selections from Sharon's field sessions; eliciting reciprocals.

5. week 7 (Th Feb 15, 2:30-4:30) Texts  
Reading to discuss: Chelliah, 2001, Gippert, 2006  
Show and tell: Texts prepared by Sharon and Julia

6. week 8 (Th Feb 22, 2:30-4:30) Grammars  
Reading to discuss: Rice, 2001, Mosel, 2006a  
Assignment due: a set of elicitation questions for the linguistic topic of interest to you in this class. These must be very concrete questions, exactly what you would ask your speaker. Minimum 12 questions.  
Show and tell: the development of the Fort Ware Tsek'ene and Witsuwit'en orthographies; Cook 1990 and critique by Hargus in press

7. week 9 (Feb 26) Dictionaries  
Video clip from *Ball of fire*.  
Reading to discuss: Haviland, 2006, Frawley et al., 2002  
Show and tell: one of Sharon's dictionary databases; Julia's Shoebox database

8. week 9 (Wed Feb 28 3:30-4:30?) Zev Handel: guest lecture/Q&A:  
Doing fieldwork in China. Zev's field equipment.

9. week 10 (Mar 5) Archiving field materials, metadata; language work for the community of speakers  
Reading to discuss: Trilsbeck and Wittenburg, 2006; Nathan, 2006, Newman, 1999  
Assignment due: select one of the older (pre-1980) sources on linguistic fieldwork in the extended bibliography at the end of this syllabus under General or Fieldwork in specific geographical areas. Write a five-page critique explaining which aspects of the methods seem relevant today and which aspects seem out-dated. Bring your critique to class and be prepared to discuss it.

10. week 10 (Th Mar 8 2:30-3:30?) Emily Bender: guest lecture/Q&A.  
The Grammar Matrix project.

finals week Final project due

Final project: you are to write a mock grant proposal for field research, probably an extension of the topic reported on in your earlier annotated bibliography. Your proposal should contain the following sections:

- Cover page (funding agency targeted, title of project, amount of money requested)
- Description of proposed research, including work plan (limit: 12 single-spaced pages, including bibliography)
- Budget and budget justification (3 pages maximum)

### **Additional references on linguistic fieldwork**

Notice that this does not include web sites. A good one to start with is [www.chass.utoronto.ca/lingfieldwork](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/lingfieldwork)

General: Nida, 1947; Longacre, 1964; Hale, 1964/65; Samarin, 1967 (reviewed by Merrifield, 1968); Gudschinsky, 1967; Wax, 1971; Kibrik, 1977; Comrie and Smith, 1977; Burling, 1984; Bouquiaux and Thomas, 1992 [first published 1976; appears to be merely reprinted]; Vaux and Cooper, 1999; Newman, 1992; Newman and Ratliff, 2001a; Gippert et al., 2006; Crowley, 2007; Bower, 2008

Working with monolingual speakers: Loving, 1975

Fieldwork in specific geographical areas:

Australia: Wurm, 1967, Sutton and Walsh, 1979; Tsunoda, 2005 [focus is worldwide language endangerment issues, but lots of information also provided on fieldwork experiences]

India: Abbi, 2001

'Developing countries and beyond': Fife, 2005

Memoirs/biographies of linguistic fieldworkers:

Bob Dixon: Dixon, 1984

Ken Hale: Hale, 2001, Green, 2001

A.G. Morice: Mulhall, 1986

J.P. Harrington: Laird, 1975; Walsh, 1976

David Wilkins: Wilkins, 1992

Melville Jacobs: Seaburg and Amoss, 2000

All of the contributions to Newman and Ratliff, 2001b are autobiographical to a certain extent.

Fieldwork for specific purposes:

Phonetics: Ladefoged, 1997; Ladefoged, 2003, Maddieson, 2001

Syntax: Gil, 2001, Chelliah, 2001, Payne, 1997 (sort of)

Sociolinguistics: Labov, 1984

First language acquisition: McDaniel et al., 1996

Second language acquisition: Freed, 1978

Anthropological perspectives: Mead, 1939; Lounsbury, 1953

A speaker's perspective: McLaughlin and Sall, 2001 (part II)

Outdated computational linguistic perspective: Lawler, 1967

### Video depictions of fieldwork:

Linguistic: Brackett and Wilder, 1941 [very small amount on linguistic fieldwork]; Kramer et al., 2009

Ethnomusicological: Venetis et al., 2001

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