

Field Methods: Tigrinya

Teacher:

What is the highest technique you hope to achieve?

(character played by) Bruce Lee:

To have no technique.

from *Enter the dragon*

“It will take everything you know about everything.” (paraphrase of advice to Jimmy Kimmel before taking on *The Tonight Show*)

**Course description**

This class provides students with a chance to practice doing linguistic fieldwork, one of the primary ways in which linguists obtain data. Sources of data in linguistics can be roughly divided into ‘existing’ and ‘new’:

	Existing data (closed corpus)		New data (open corpus)		
type	philology	corpus linguistics	idiolectal description	socio-, phonetic	fieldwork
primary methods, skills	language study	programming	introspection, linguistic training	observation, elicitation; quantitative	observation, elicitation; qualitative
source	mss. and media, published or unpublished	computer files	linguist’s own language	own or other language	own or other language
advantage	no inter-personal issues	large amounts of data	logistically easy, questions answerable	dealing with people, questions answerable	dealing with people, questions answerable
disadvantage	questions may not be answerable	questions may not be answerable	native linguistic knowledge required	lots of people required, logistic set-up	dealing with people, logistic set-up

If fieldwork is time-consuming, expensive and logistically difficult, then why bother with it?

- Theoretical linguistics needs detailed descriptions of languages, and is enriched by knowledge of linguistic diversity.
- By some estimates, ninety per cent of the world's languages may disappear in the next 100 years.
- Fieldwork can be personally satisfying.

## **Learning goals**

- To expose students to the goals and practices of modern language documentation
- To prepare students for independent fieldwork on a language of their choosing

## **Prerequisites**

Students who take this class should have had at least LING 451 and 461. The more linguistics, the better! Your linguistics training will make your questions better.

## **Expectations of class participants**

class logistics = making recordings, processing and uploading recordings, bringing refreshments to class, obtaining and sharing readings

### *580C students*

- weekly participation in in-class elicitation (speaker will assess too)
- weekly outside elicitation
- written assignments (4), due weeks 4-10
- final project, due finals week
- assist with class logistics

### *580D students*

- weekly participation in in-class elicitation (speaker will assess too)
- biweekly participation in outside elicitation with 580C students and assistance with written assignments
- assist with class logistics

### *Auditors*

- weekly participation in in-class elicitation
- outside elicitation encouraged
- assist with class logistics

Written assignments will be due on Fridays at 6 pm.

## **Final project options**

(1) Write a (real or mock) grant proposal for field research on Tigrinya or some other language. 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)

You may find useful information in Wittenburg 2003 and/or Austin 2010.

(2) Select one of the written assignments turned in during weeks 1-10. Revise and expand it.

(3) Select a syntactic topic to investigate and write up.

## Topics covered

reading key: VC = Vaux and Cooper 1999. Ig-specific readings to be agreed upon and added later.

<i>week</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>reading (before class)</i>	<i>in-class discussion</i>	<i>in-class Tigrinya</i>	<i>assignment due that week</i>
1	1-6	Voigt 2011a, Voigt 2011b	introductions; goals of language documentation; syllabus review, Tigrinya linguistics, access to materials; recorder training (Ben Jones); field notes ... phonology	greetings, basic conversation, random	
2	1-13	Hayward and Hayward 1999, Shosted and Rose 2011	phonological issues	contrast and allophony	
3	1-20		HOLIDAY		
4	1-27		phonological issues, cont. ... topical dictionaries; Tigrinya dictionaries	contrast and allophony	<i>JIPA</i> -style phonological sketch
5	2-3	Borelli 2008 (video), ch. 2 of Kifle 2011	... nominal morphology	lexicon	word list from a lexical domain
6	2-10	chs. 3-5 of Berhane 1991	... verbal morphology	verbal morphology	
7	2-17		HOLIDAY		
8	2-24		verbal morphology ... text recording, text	verbal morphology	overview of verbal morphology; paradigms

			preparation		
9	3-2	chs. 4-5 of Kifle 2011, Kogan 1997 (Syntax)	... syntactic features of text	textual glossing and translation; morphosyntax	
10	3-9			textual glossing and translation; morphosyntax	text
F					final project

## References cited

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- Berhane, Girmay. 1991. *Issues in the phonology and morphology of Tigrinya*, Department of Linguistics, Université de Québec à Montréal.
- Borelli, Caterina. 2008. Asmara, Eritrea: [Watertown, MA] Documentary Educational Resources.
- Hayward, Katrina, and Richard J. Hayward. 1999. 'Amharic.' In *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ed. by International Phonetic Association. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 45-50.
- Kifle, Nazareth Amlesom. 2011. *Tigrinya Applicatives in Lexical-Functional Grammar*. PhD dissertation, Department of Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies, University of Bergen.
- Shosted, Ryan K., and Sharon Rose. 2011. 'Affricating Ejective Fricatives: The Case of Tigrinya.' *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 41 (1):41-65.
- Vaux, Bert, and Justin Cooper. 1999. *Introduction to Linguistic Field Methods*. Munich: Lincom Europa.
- Voigt, Rainer. 2011a. '68. Tigrinya.' In *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. by Stefan Weninger, Geoffrey Khan, Michael P. Streck and Janet Watson. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 1153-1169.
- Voigt, Rainer. 2011b. '69. Tigrinya as National Language of Eritrea and Tigray.' In *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. by Stefan Weninger, Geoffrey Khan, Michael P. Streck and Janet Watson. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 1170-1177.
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