

LING 336 : LINGUISTIC FIELD METHODS

W 6:10–9:00 PM, Vollum 309

Course Syllabus

Fall 2010

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Office hrs: Tues 4:30–5:30 PM, Wed 1:00–3:00 PM, or by appointment

Tsering Bum (language consultant)

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Phone: 503-869-8861
Availability: Mon, Wed, Fri (morning preferred, afternoon OK)

Prerequisites

Students must have taken LING 211 (or equivalent) and at least one 300-level linguistics course in order to enroll in this class. It is highly recommended (though not required) that students complete one or more of the following courses, either prior to or concurrently with Field Methods: LING 320 ‘Phonetics’, LING 321 ‘Phonology’, LING 323 ‘Introductory Syntax’, LING 324 ‘Advanced Topics in Syntax’, LING 326 ‘Discourse’, LING 328 ‘Morphosyntactic Typology’, and LING 329 ‘Morphology’.

Requirements and Policies

This course provides students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in elicitation techniques by gathering data on an unfamiliar language, and producing descriptions of grammatical phenomena in the language based on that data. This semester we will be working on **Tibetan**, with a focus on the **Amdo** variety spoken in parts of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu (western China).

Our consultant for the course is **Tsering Bum** (Cairangben), who comes from Qinghai. Tsering is a native speaker of Amdo Tibetan, and also speaks Mandarin, Qinghaihua (the Qinghai dialect of Chinese), and English. He will be working with us in class, and will also be available for consultation sessions outside of class, as discussed below.

There are no problem sets, exams, or reading assignments for this course. The course grade will be based entirely on participation (both inside and outside of class), a mid-term paper and presentation, and a final paper and presentation. Participation will count for approximately **40%** of the final grade, will the mid-term and final projects will count for approximately **20%** and **40%**, respectively.

Participation

Field Methods is structured as a lab-only course, rather than a standard lecture/seminar course. Class periods will be spent either collecting data or discussing strategies for analyzing and describing that data. Since this project is a group effort, regular attendance and participation are crucial to the success of the class. Participation will consist of:

1. *Attendance* — Students are required to come to every Wednesday night session (I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period). Only absences for illness or other non-school-related emergencies will be excused.
2. *In-class participation* — Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate actively in group elicitation sessions. Please bring a notebook or laptop to every class to record data. Also, be sure to review the data from the previous week and come with suggestions for questions to ask or topics to investigate. Later in the semester (especially after spring break, when you begin working on your final papers), each student will be asked to lead the elicitation for a portion of the class period.
3. *Outside elicitation* — Students will be responsible for meeting with the language consultant outside of class to gather data on topics of their choice. At first you will probably want to meet with Tsering only once a week for 30 minutes, in groups of two or three. As the semester progresses and you begin to work on your research projects, you will need to meet with Tsering one-on-one for longer periods.
4. *Data management* — Each student will be expected to maintain a notebook or laptop file containing all the data we've elicited in class. We will also be consolidating our data into a single electronic database, containing a word list and a list of sentences, which can be accessed and updated online (see below). Students will be assigned the responsibility of updating and editing the database on a rotating basis.

Electronic resources

As mentioned above, part of the work for the course will involve constructing an online database containing the results of our elicitation work. We will be trying out a new web-based application called **WebLinDa** (or “Web-based Linguistic Database”), administered by Andrew Carnie at the University of Arizona. WebLinDa is still in development, but already it has a number of useful features, such as the ability to enter data in IPA, automated lexicon development (new words entered as part of an example sentence are automatically added to the dictionary), sophisticated search functions, and the capacity for multiple users to add and update entries (much like in a wiki document). The log-in page for WebLinDa is at the URL below (a link has also been added to the course Moodle page):

<http://www.gaelicgrammar.org/weblinda/>

The database for this course is called “AmdoTibetan”. You should already be added to the system. To log in, simply enter your user ID and password. Your WebLinDa user ID is the part of your Reed email address preceding the @ (for instance, my user ID is *pearsonm*). At the moment, your password is set to “password” (no quotes). Please log in and change your password immediately by clicking on “My account” in the navigation window at the left hand side of the screen. *Any students who have not changed their password by **Sunday, September 5** will be locked out by the system administrator!*

We will be learning how to use WebLinDa as we go along. For a brief tutorial, go to the log-in page and click on “Documentation” in the upper left hand corner.

Note that there is also a Moodle page for this course. At the moment this page includes an electronic copy of the syllabus, a news forum, and links to the WebLinDa page, e-reserve readings, and other web resources. Additional material may be added to the Moodle page as we go along.

Papers and presentations

Students will complete two research projects based on topics of their choice, each consisting of a paper and a short in-class presentation. The first (shorter) project will be due at mid-term, while the second (longer) project will be due at the end of the semester. Research projects will be based on the data gathered in class and in outside elicitation sessions, optionally supplemented by data from published sources (where available). Due dates for the papers are:

Mid-term paper:	27 October	6:10 PM (in class)
Final paper:	16 December	5:00 PM (in my office)

The two research projects must be on different topics. Projects may be entirely descriptive, though I would also welcome attempts to provide a formal (phonetic, phonological, morphological, or syntactic) analysis of some body of Tibetan data, as well as cross-linguistic comparisons between Tibetan and phenomena in other languages. Please consult with me to discuss your ideas and interests before settling on a topic.

1. *Mid-term project* — The mid-term paper should be roughly 7–15 pages in length (this includes examples), and is expected to be largely descriptive. Short in-class presentations will be held the evening the paper is due.
2. *Final project* – The final paper should be roughly 10–20 pages, and is expected to be more in-depth than the mid-term paper—involving either a wider range of data, a formal/comparative analysis component, or both. Presentations based on the final paper project will be scheduled for the last week or two of class. My tentative plan is to hold a mini-conference, or ‘Tibetan Fest’, where we order food, and invite Ling and Anthro majors, Tibetan speakers, and other interested parties to attend the talks.

Papers will be evaluated on completeness, conciseness, organization and presentation of the data, correct application of terminology, and clarity and precision of language. Papers may be submitted in hardcopy or electronic formats. If you submit your paper electronically, PDF is preferred.

Supplementary Readings

As mentioned above, there are no textbooks or required readings for this course. Please refrain from looking at any published or online sources on Tibetan (or closely related languages) for the first few weeks of the semester. I will notify you when it is all right to consult outside sources.

The following books and articles provide background information on field linguistics and elicitation techniques. Feel free to consult these sources at any time.

Bowern, Claire. (2008) *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*. Palgrave. <24-hour print reserve: P128.F53 B69 2008>

- Comrie, Bernard and Norval Smith. (1977) “Lingua Descriptive Studies: Questionnaire”. *Lingua* 42(1), pp. 1–72. <24-hour reserve folder; also available on Moodle>
- Craig, Colette. (1987) “Jacaltec: Field Work in Guatemala”, in *Languages and Their Speakers*, ed. T. Shopen. University of Pennsylvania Press. <2-hour print reserve for LING 211: P106.L318 1987>
- Gippert, Jost, Nikolaus Himmelmann, and Ulrike Mosel. (2006) *Essentials of Language Documentation*. Mouton de Gruyter. <24-hour print reserve: P128.D63 E85 2006>
- Munro, Pamela. (2001) “Field Linguistics”, in *The Handbook of Linguistics*, ed. M. Aronoff and J. Rees-Miller. Blackwell. <reference section: P121.H324 2001>
- Payne, Thomas. (1997) *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*. Cambridge University Press. <2-hour print reserve for LING 328: P241.P39 1997>
- Vaux, Bert, Justin Cooper, and Emily Tucker. (2007) *Linguistic Field Methods*. Wipf & Stock. <24-hour print reserve: P128.F53 V38 2007>