

LING 336 : LINGUISTIC FIELD METHODS

Wednesday 6:10–9:00 PM, Vollum 228

Course Syllabus

Fall 2015

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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 **Igbo**, a Niger-Congo language spoken primarily in southeastern Nigeria. Our consultant for the course is **Emmanuel Enemchukwu**. 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 regular 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 around **40%** of the final course grade, while 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 seminar/conference 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 session (I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period). Only absences for illness or 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 I will ask you to meet with Emmanuel in groups of two, once a week for around 30 minutes. As the semester progresses and you begin to work on your research projects, you will probably need to meet with Emmanuel individually for somewhat longer sessions.
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 in a single electronic database which can be accessed and updated online (see below). Students will be required to add the data from their outside elicitations to this database so that other students in the course can access it.

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 around the middle of the semester, 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:	March 18	6:10 PM (in class)
Final paper:	May 14	5:00 PM

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, syntactic, semantic, or discourse) analysis of some body of Igbo data, as well as cross-linguistic comparisons between Igbo 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 to 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 to 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 end of the semester. My tentative plan is to hold a mini-conference, or 'Igbo Fest', where we order food, and invite Linguistics students, faculty, 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.

Electronic resources

There is a **Moodle** page for this course, which includes an electronic copy of the syllabus, a news forum, a reading list, and links to various online tools and resources, including the web-based database which we will be using to manage our data (see below). In addition, I will be recording our weekly sessions (at least for the first few weeks of the semester) and uploading the recordings to Moodle as *.wav* files so that you can use them for transcription or phonetics projects. Additional material will be added to the Moodle page as we go along.

1. **Data management software** — 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 web-based application called **LingSync**, created by a team of linguists from McGill and Concordia Universities in Montréal (including Jessica Coon, a Reed Linguistics alum). This tool is still in development, but it already incorporates a number of useful features, such as semi-automated morpheme glossing, sophisticated search and download functions, and the capacity for multiple users to add and edit entries (much as in a wiki document). The log-in page for LingSync is at the URL below. You can also link to this page from the course Moodle page.

http://app.lingsync.org/#/corpora_list

All our data will be stored in a LingSync ‘corpus’ called **LING 336 Field Methods 2015**. In order to access this corpus so you can add and update data, you will need to go to the LingSync log-in page and create an account. Once you have an account, send me your user name so that I can add you to the corpus as an administrator. The corpus will be divided into a number of smaller files, called ‘sessions’, each containing the data from (a portion of) an elicitation session or text. You will be responsible for entering the data from your outside elicitation sessions into LingSync so that other students can access it.

We will be using LingSync in class and exploring its features together, so hopefully you will get the hang of using it quite quickly. Additional information about this tool, including web and video tutorials, links, and a form for emailing LingSync developers with questions and suggestions, can be found at: www.lingsync.org.

2. **IPA transcription** — One disadvantage of LingSync is that it doesn’t directly support IPA symbols. However, these can be entered manually from the **IPA Palette** symbol window. IPA Palette is a free application. If you don’t already have it on your computer, I suggest you download it from the website below:

<http://www.blugs.com/IPA/>

I can help you if you’re not sure how to install IPA Palette, or you can get assistance from the CUS Help Desk. Note that IPA Palette is not an Apple-approved app, so if you have a Mac you may need to do a security override before your computer will download it.

3. **Recording your elicitation sessions** — As noted above, I will be recording our weekly in-class elicitation sessions and uploading the sound files to the Moodle page. I strongly recommend

that you do the same for your outside elicitation sessions, at least for the first few weeks of the course while we're working on the sound system of Igbo. You can record directly onto your computer using either **Praat** or **Audacity**. I will be using Audacity, available for free download from the website below (as with IPA Palette, you may need to do a security override before this program will install on your computer).

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

For help installing or using Praat and Audacity, or to check out an external microphone from the Lab of Linguistics (LoL) to use in recording your sessions, contact the LoL lab manager, **Yevgeniy Melguy** (ymelguy@reed.edu), or visit him during his office hours. A link to the LoL website can be found on the Moodle page.

READING LIST

As mentioned above, there are no textbooks or regular reading assignments for this course. There are a handful of linguistic and grammatical resources available on Igbo, which you are encouraged to consult where appropriate while working on your research projects. I will be compiling a list of these resources and posting them in the Bibliography section on the course Moodle page. If you come across any additional articles on Igbo as you're working on your research papers, please let me know and I will add them to the list.

The following books and articles provide background information on field linguistics and elicitation techniques. Feel free to consult these sources at any time. I may occasionally recommend or require that you read chapters from some of these.

- Bowern, Claire. (2008) *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*. Palgrave. <2-hour print reserve: P128.F53 B69 2008>
- Craig, Colette. (1987) "Jacalteco: Field Work in Guatemala", in *Languages and Their Speakers*, ed. T. Shopen. University of Pennsylvania Press. <24-hour print reserve: 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 of the Library: P121.H324 2001>
- Newman, Paul & Martha Ratliff. (2001) *Linguistic Fieldwork*. Cambridge University Press. <24-hour print reserve: P128.F53 L56 2001>
- Payne, Thomas. (1997) *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*. Cambridge University Press. <2-hour print reserve: P241.P39 1997>
- Vaux, Bert, Justin Cooper, and Emily Tucker. (2007) *Linguistic Field Methods*. Wipf & Stock. <24-hour print reserve: P128.F53 V38 2007>