ENGLISH 306A

An Introduction to Linguistics

Fall 1994

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Office Hours: 1:30 - 2:30 Tuesday/Thursday
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English 306A is intended to introduce you to some topics and methods of linguistic analysis. In a survey such as this, there is, of course, time to consider only a very limited number of topics but the few that we can discuss should give you some appreciation for issues which have influenced anthropology, psychology, literary criticism, and philosophy, especially in the past decade. I hope that you will also come to appreciate more fully the power and richness of human language.

306A is not a "grammar" course as "grammar" is popularly understood. We will be less concerned with the way any one person or group of people assume language "ought" to be used than with ways in which it is used. For this reason, you should begin to listen closely to the varieties of English spoken around you and to make yourself aware of the varying sounds, structures, and gestures which you use and which you hear and see others using. Keep in mind that we are focusing attention primarily upon the spoken language and not upon writing. Our examination will range from the individual sounds used in languages in general--and the English language in particular--to the structure of discourses and the development of meaning. Clearly, this will involve detailed examination of some points and while these details are important, I am also concerned that you be alert to the methods involved in our analysis and the assumptions underlying those methods.

Text Readings

Please read the assigned section before the days on which the subject is scheduled for discussion. You might follow the schedule outlined below even if we fall behind in lectures. It is confusing and frustrating--to say nothing of boring--to sit through classes for which you are not prepared. Obviously we can not talk about all of the material in the textbook; we do not have sufficient time nor is there much point in rehearsing what you can read by yourself. Instead I will pick out certain issues and approach them in a slightly different manner from the textbook.

A good plan of approach is to read each section through once completely, and then to go back and re-read it, taking notes as you do so. The amount of reading in this course is very small and such a plan is not impractical. To assist in your understanding both of method and detail, the exercises at the end of each chapter are very useful. As students have observed in the past, these exercises drive home the points in the text and if you are able to do them, you will probably have mastered the material. From time to time, we will go over a few of these
and similar exercises, doing them collectively to assure ourselves that we understand the concepts.

If you have any questions about the reading or the class lectures, be sure to ask me. My job is to help you with what may be new and, at times, puzzling material. If you are reluctant to speak in class—though you may be certain that others have the same questions—be sure to see me after class or during office hours.

I would also recommend the formation of "study groups" of three to five people to review the sample questions that will be handed out a week or ten days before each of the three "mid-term" examinations. In fact, such groups might meet periodically to go over the exercises in the textbook and to talk about the material in the text and lectures. [Please note that there will be no "study questions" for the final exam].

Text

Examinations
1. 20% (in class) | These examinations will be based on the material in the textbook and on the lectures and classes.
2. 25% (in class) | These examinations will be based on the material in the textbook and on the lectures and classes.
3. 25% (in class) | These examinations will be based on the material in the textbook and on the lectures and classes.
4. 30% Final (covering all of the course). Scheduled by the university during the examination period.

We will look at the following topics from Akmajian et al. If you follow this schedule in your reading you should have no difficulty getting though the material:

   Introduction
   "The Structure of Human Language"; Chapter 1: "What is Linguistics";
   Appendix: "The Written Representation of Language"; Chapter 11: "Language Acquisition in Child and Chimp";

2. Weeks of 27 Sept, 4 Oct, and 11 Oct
   Chapter 3 and Chapter 4: "Phonetics" and "Phonology."
   Exam 1: 6 Oct—in class.

   Chapter 2: "Morphology. . . ."
   Exam 2: 27 Oct—in class.

4. Week of 8 Nov and 15 Nov
   Chapter 5: "Syntax. . . ."
5. Week of 22 Nov and 29 Nov
   Chapter 6: "Semantics. . . ."
   Chapter 9: "Pragmatics. . . ."
   **Exam 3: 22 Nov--in class**

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**Supplementary Reading**

There are a number of useful introductory linguistic texts available in the Dana Porter Library or as used books. These generally cover the same ground as the assigned text but with variation in presentation and examples. The text by O’Grady and Dobrovolsky also provides illustrations drawn from Canadian English and may, therefore, be of special interest:


