

LIN 230 Languages of the World

Fall 2023

Instructor:	Yongqing Ye	Faculty contact:	Dr. Deo Ngonyani
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Class Schedule:	Mon/Wed 8:30-9:50am	Location:	Wells Hall B100
Office:	Wells Hall B-320	Office hours:	Mon 12-1, Tu 2-3 & by appointment

About this course

Course description

This course introduces you to the diversity of languages of the world. We will also cover how linguistic construction interact with other social factors such as history and culture. The course is primarily designed to enhance your social science literacy and engage you from a humanities perspective with issues such as linguistic diversity, language policies, colonial history etc. No prior familiarity with linguistics is required.

Course goals

The course is designed to help you:

- engage with studies on languages beyond an Indo-European context.
- examine the study of language contact, variation and change within its historical context.
- understand different theoretical approaches to examining languages.
- be able to apply observational and analytical methods you have learned in this class to other topics about dialects and languages.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

- Describe language diversity in language families, language structures, sound systems, the number of speakers, language vitality, writing systems, etc.
- Interpret patterns in language data and analyze them with linguistic concepts.
- Identify English membership in the Indo-European language family.
- Describe how languages are studied in terms of sounds, word structure, sentence structure, meaning, pragmatics, discourse, society, acquisition, brain, etc.
- Describe relationship of languages and diachronic changes.
- Identify factors involved in language change.
- Explain the dominance of English, Spanish, and French.
- Identify features shared by languages and systematic covariation.
- Evaluate the position of English in America within its historical contexts.

Course Materials

Required:

- Fromkin, V. , Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. 2019. An Introduction to Language. Wadsworth. 9th edition or later. Latest edition (11th) reserved through the MSU library. [Electronic access link to the 10th edition.](#)

Recommended:

- Lyovin, A., Kessler, B., & Leben, W. (2017). *An Introduction to the Languages of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Access through MSU electronic resources](#).
- Pereltsvaig, A. (2017). *Languages of the World: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Electronic Access Link](#).
- Horobin, S. (2018). *The English language: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Electronic Access Link with your MSU login](#).
- Additional readings and other materials for this class may be distributed in class, posted on D2L or reserved through the MSU library.

Course requirements and evaluation

The course will be graded out of 100 percentage points. Final grades will be converted to a 4.0 scale.

Course components

Grading scale

Participation	10 %				
Individual assignments	20 %	4.0	90-100%	2.0	70-74%
Group assignments	20 %	3.5	85-89%	1.5	65-69%
Project presentation	20 %	3.0	80-84%	1.0	60-64%
Final project	30 %	2.5	75-79%		

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: It is imperative that you attend the class and participate if you want to succeed in this course. Attendance is required. Your attendance will be assessed with a coded representation according to the following legend: Attended (A), Unexcused Absence (U), Excused Absence (E). Your final grade will be reduced by 1 point for each absence after the first 2 absences, excused or unexcused. If there is a situation of extreme lack in participation in any regard, your grade may be affected.

Students are encouraged to bring in their own perspectives and are welcome to discuss theories and methods studied in other topic-related fields. For those who prefer to not speak in front of the class, there will be multiple types of opportunities to achieve this engagement in the form of group work, presentations, and other activities.

Assignments: Much of the work in the class is in the form of individual and group assignments. These will be turned in in person unless stated otherwise.

There will be three individual assignments and four group assignments. You are also encouraged to find a group member that you'd like to work with. Otherwise, group membership will be randomly assigned. Each group turns in a single copy of the assignment with both the group members' names on it. The grade for the group is the grade that both members of the group receive.

The lowest graded group assignment will be dropped from the final grade calculation. Individual assignment grades may not be dropped.

Final Project: There will be a final project designed to help you synthesize materials from the course and put them to use. It will require you to collect your own data and analyze it. The project requirements will

be announced in class. The final project can be completed individually or as a group (max. 2 people). Project rubrics will be posted on D2L.

D2L Site: Additional class readings, PowerPoints (if any) and handouts will be posted on the D2L site. **Please make sure your D2L is linked to your MSU email.** There will also be useful links to other online resources. If you have problems with any material on the site please e-mail your instructor as soon as possible.

Office hour: Office hours are held twice a week. I will be meeting with students in person in my office on Mondays and will be on Zoom on Tuesdays. If you'd like to meet in person or via Zoom on a particular day, please let me know in advance so we can make proper arrangements. If you cannot make it to a scheduled office hour, please make an appointment with me.

Late work policies: Assignment due dates will be explicitly stated on the assignments. If you need more time for a particular assignment, please contact the course instructor. Once we go over the answers of a particular assignment in class, no late work for that assignment is accepted.

Course policies and procedures

Tech help: Regardless of how much we prepare, or how good we are with technology, problems will arise. The University offers assistance with technical questions or any problems that may come up. The Technology Support Center has a help line that is available from 7 a.m. to midnight any day the University is open: (517) 432-6200 or (844) 678-6200. The Technology Support Center also has an online chat service that you can access at their website: <https://tech.msu.edu/support/help/>. Additionally, there is a D2L Help website that you can access at: <https://help.d2l.msu.edu/>.

Communication: I will answer questions as quickly as I can, and usually within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. You can either ask your question directly or set up an appointment, and we'll figure out the best media (chat, Zoom, phone, etc.) for our conversation. If you have websites, videos, news articles etc. that are relevant to the course and that you'd like to share with classmates, you send them to me.

Academic honesty: You are encouraged to discuss class material with your fellow students. All written work must be written up on your own in your own words. If you make use of anybody else's ideas, please make sure to cite your source. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism and for avoiding it. See the University policy for plagiarism at <https://msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html>.

Accommodation for disability: Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Basic needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the University's division of Student Affairs and

Services (<http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/>) for support. Furthermore, please notify me or the Faculty of Record, Deo Ngonyani (ngonyani@msu.edu) if you are comfortable in doing so.

Classroom respect: To create an environment that is supportive, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating, individual students must feel that their voices are heard and respected. Every person is responsible for their language and interactions, and should show regard for others while valuing free speech. Disruptive behavior that impedes the teaching/learning process will not be tolerated and is grounds for withdrawing a student from the course if it is persistent. Respect diversity. Sexism, racism, or language that is offensive to others is unacceptable. In general, when you're talking to others about their opinion, or their support for a claim in a course text, make it clear that you're composing a constructive criticism, not a personal attack. Where possible, back up your arguments with evidence.

Concerns: The Chair of the Department of Linguistics and Languages is always available to hear any concerns you might have about this course. See <https://lilac.msu.edu/contact> for contact details. The Office of the University Ombudsperson is also available to assist students with any conflict or problem that has to do with being a student at Michigan State University. You may visit the Ombudsperson in 129 North Kedzie, call (517) 353-8830 or e-mail ombud@msu.edu. The Office of the University Ombudsperson is an independent, neutral, informal and confidential resource and does not accept formal complaints, nor does it provide notice to the University.

Limits to confidentiality: Materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me: (i) Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child, (ii) Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and (iii) Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others. These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Spartan Code of Honor Academic Pledge

As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.

Schedule

Below is a rough schedule of the topics we'll cover. Please note that the schedule is tentative and could change depending on pace, student interest, etc.

Readings must be completed during the week in which they are listed.

Wk	Date	Monday	Wednesday
1	Aug 28th/30th	Introduction & Overview	The Study of Language Reading: <u>Fromkin</u> et. al. Chapter 1
2	Sep 4th/6th	Labor Day No Class	Language Families Reading: Pereltsvaig, Chapter 1
3	Sep 11th/13th	Writing Systems Reading: Fromkin et. al. Chapter 12	Phonetics: Consonants
4	Sep 18th/20th	Phonetics: Vowels and Syllables	Languages: Similarities and Differences
5	Sep 25th/27th	The Languages of the Americas Reading: Pereltsvaig, Chapter 10	Morphology
6	Oct 2nd/4th	The Languages of Africa Reading: Pereltsvaig,, Chapters 6	Phonology
7	Oct 9th/11th	The Languages of Europe Reading: Pereltsvaig, Chapter 2	Syntax
Middle of Semester			
8	Oct 16th/18th	The Languages of Asia Reading: Pereltsvaig, Chapter 3 & 7	The Languages of Oceania Reading: Pereltsvaig, Chapter 8 & 9
9	Oct 23rd/25th	Fall Break No Class	Semantics and Pragmatics
10	Oct 30th Nov 1st	Language and Culture	Presentation/Discussion of Project Ideas
11	Nov 6th/8th	Language Contact and Change Reading: Fromkin et. al. Chapter 8	*Guest Lecture: Language and Gender

12	Nov 13th/15th	English: a Global Language Reading: Horobin 2018, Chapters 2, 5, 6	Rethinking English
13	Nov 20th/22nd	Languages and Dialects	Film: Talking Black in America
14	Nov 27th/29th	Language Endangerment Lyovin et al. Chapter 8	Metaphors we live by
15	Dec 4th/6th	Final Project Presentations	Final Project Presentations
Final Project Due Friday, December 15th, 11:59pm			

Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change. If it does, I'll let you in class, and will upload a new version of the syllabus to D2L.