

EL3212 Field Methods in Linguistics

National University of Singapore

2015–2016 Semester 2, Tuesdays 15:00–18:00 AS4-0119

Instructor

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Office: AS5 06-09

Office hours: Wednesdays 10:00–12:00 and by appt

Language consultant

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(always cc mitcho)

Consultations: AS5 03-07

Description

This module develops practical skills in linguistic fieldwork. The centrepiece of the module is the investigation of an unfamiliar language through structured interviews with native speakers. Students will elicit, record, transcribe, and organize linguistic data. Together we will gain a basic understanding of aspects of the grammar of the language. Students will also develop original hypotheses regarding the language's structure, test these hypotheses, and share their findings through written reports. Ethical issues that arise in conducting linguistic fieldwork will also be discussed.

This semester, we will investigate **Nepali**.

Class structure

Class time (Tuesdays) will be divided into three periods:

- **seminar** (less than an hour): we cover a particular topic (see schedule below) and have time for group discussion of open questions, challenges, and elicitation plans;
- **naturalistic elicitation** (less than thirty minutes): a group uses a task to elicit roughly 5 minutes of naturalistic (narrative or conversational) speech.
- **structured elicitation** (about an hour): we investigate the language together through structured elicitation, led by a group. Note that all students should participate in and take notes on elicitation, although one particular group will lead.

Class participants will be organized into small groups of two or three. Each group will be responsible for one naturalistic elicitation session and leading one structured elicitation session throughout the semester (see schedule below). In addition to our class on Tuesdays, each group will have a regular **one hour meeting with the consultant outside of class**, beginning Week 3.

Assessments and evaluation

1. Attendance and participation in seminar and in-class elicitation 5%
2. Attendance and participation in weekly small group meetings with the consultant 5%
3. In-class naturalistic task (by small group):
 - Plan: submit by Sunday before for approval 5%
 - Execution 5%
 - Transcription: due one week later 5%

Transcription should have sentence-by-sentence English translations and rough glossing, as much as possible.
4. Leading in-class elicitation (by small group):
 - Plan: submit by Sunday before for approval 5%
 - Execution 5%
 - Reflection paper: due one week later; 1–2 pages 5%

A reflection on how the elicitation went, observations, etc. Submit as group.
5. Scribe duty (twice): due one week later 2 × 5%

Each in-class structured elicitation will have designated scribes who are responsible for maintaining the official class “field notes.” This involves transcribing all Nepali data *with glosses and translations*, as well as additional information on the task at hand, speaker reactions and comments, open questions raised, etc.
6. Short assignments: individual; 1–2 pages in length 5 × 5%

See schedule below. Due by the beginning of class.
7. Final paper: individual; approximately 10 pages 25%

Due Friday, April 22

Final papers are *individual projects*. Therefore students should share the time in weekly consultant meetings, being aware of each other’s projects and cooperating, but not pursuing a shared project.

Website and materials

- Public materials will be posted to <https://mitcho.com/nus/field2016/> .
- IVLE will be used extensively. Please make sure you have access to the module on IVLE.
- The primary text will be Bowerman (2008), which we have online access to through the library: <http://linc.nus.edu.sg/record=b2996173> . But you may want to buy a copy.

Schedule

The schedule will be updated once groups are determined.

| Date | Seminar (<1h) | Naturalistic task (<30m) | Elicitation (1h) leader |
|--|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 12/1 | Course overview | mitcho | mitcho |
| | <i>After class:</i> complete IVLE > Survey > Week 1 survey | | |
| 19/1 | Groups, session planning | mitcho | mitcho |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Bower (2008) chapters 3 and 5 | | |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Assignment 1: transcription practice | | |
| Weekly small group elicitation begins Week 3 (Monday the 25th) | | | |
| 26/1 | Naturalistic tasks | A | D |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Bower (2008) chapter 9 and Louie (2015) | | |
| 02/2 | Elicitation | B | E |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Bower (2008) chapter 6; skim Deal (2015) | | |
| 09/2 | Lunar New Year: No class (but consultant meetings continue this week) | | |
| 16/2 | Data management | C | F |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Bower (2008) chapter 4 | | |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Assignment 2: typological questions | | |
| 23/2 | Recess Week: No class and no consultant meetings | | |
| 01/3 | Ethics | D | A |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Bower (2008) chapter 11 and Rice (2006) | | |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Assignment 3: reading response | | |
| 08/3 | What we know so far | E | mitcho |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Assignment 4: summary of findings and paper topic proposal | | |
| 15/3 | Hypothesis testing | F | B |
| 22/3 | Tools | mitcho | C |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Assignment 5: hypothesis testing | | |
| 29/3 | Writing up results | A | D |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Noonan (2007) | | |
| 05/4 | TBD | B | E |
| 12/4 | Recap | C | F |
| Friday 22/4: Final paper due | | | |

Policies

- **Integrity:** The use of others' ideas or expressions without citation is plagiarism. You must declare all sources in submitted work. Citations don't need to be in any particular format, but they have to be there.
- **Attendance, participation, and respect for the consultant:** Attendance is mandatory and active participation is required. This is standard for most modules. However, I want to emphasize that these expectations will be enforced to the highest degree, out of respect for our language consultant and her time. In particular, **no weekly consultant meeting should be canceled or rescheduled, unless requested by the consultant.**

References

- Bochnak, M. Ryan, and Lisa Matthewson, ed. 2015. *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*. Oxford University Press.
- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: a practical guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deal, Amy Rose. 2015. Reasoning about equivalence in semantic fieldwork. In Bochnak and Matthewson (2015), chapter 6, 157–174.
- Louie, Meagan. 2015. The problem with no-nonsense elicitation plans (for semantic fieldwork). In Bochnak and Matthewson (2015), 47–71.
- Noonan, Michael. 2007. Grammar writing for a grammar-reading audience. In *Perspectives on grammar writing*, ed. Thomas E. Payne and David J. Weber, 113–126. John Benjamins.
- Rice, Keren. 2006. Ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork: An overview. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4:123–155.