

EL4212 Field Methods in Linguistics (Burmese)

National University of Singapore

2018–2019 Semester 2, Tuesdays 9:00–11:35 AS1-0303

Instructor

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Office hours: TBA and by appt

Assistant

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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 **Burmese**.

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;
- **story or lexical collection** (less than thirty minutes): a group collects a structured story (five minutes or less) or collects lexical items in a particular semantic domain.
- **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 and scribes will be in charge of the final record.

Students will be organized into small groups of two or three. Each group will be responsible for one story or lexical collection and leading one elicitation session throughout the semester (see schedule below). In addition to our Tuesday class, each group will have a regular **one hour meeting with the consultant outside of class** (room TBA), beginning Week 3.

Assessments and evaluation

1. Attendance and participation in seminar and in-class elicitation 5%
2. Submit notes from weekly sessions (and recordings if possible) 10%
3. In-class story or lexical collection (by small group):
 - Plan (submit by Sunday before for approval) and execution 5%
 - Execution and transcription (due one week later) 5%
4. Leading in-class elicitation (by small group):
 - Plan: submit by Sunday before for approval 5%
 - Execution 5%
5. Scribe duty (once) 5%

Each in-class structured elicitation will have designated scribes who are responsible for maintaining the official class “field notes.” This involves transcribing all Burmese data, as well as additional information on the task at hand, speaker reactions and comments, open questions raised, etc. Due one week later.
6. Short assignments: individual; 1–3 pages in length 4 × 5%

See schedule below. Due by the beginning of class unless otherwise noted.
7. Final presentation: individual, approximately 5–10 minutes 10%

On the last day of class
8. Final paper: individual; approximately 10 pages 30%

Due Friday, April 26

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/field2019/>.
- IVLE will be used extensively. Please make sure you have access to the module on IVLE.
- The primary texts will be Bowerman 2008, which we have online access to through the library: <http://linc.nus.edu.sg/record=b2996173>. Payne 1997 is also a useful reference, on IVLE and on reserve in the Central Library.

Schedule

The schedule will be updated once groups are determined.

Date	Seminar (<1h)	Collection (<30m)	Elicitation (1h) leader
Jan 15	Course overview, groups	mitcho (frog story)	mitcho
Jan 22	Elicitation, planning	mitcho	mitcho
	<i>Reading:</i> Bovern 2008 chapters 3 and 6		
	<i>Submit:</i> Assignment 1: transcription practice		
Weekly small group elicitation begins Week 3			
Jan 29	Ethics	mitcho	4
	<i>Reading:</i> Bovern 2008 chapter 11 and Rice 2006		
	<i>Submit:</i> Assignment 2: reading response		
Feb 5	No class: Chinese New Year		
Feb 12	Lexical + story collection	1 (story)	5
	<i>Reading:</i> Bovern 2008 chapters 5 and 8		
Feb 19	Data management	2 (lexical)	6
	<i>Reading:</i> Bovern 2008 chapter 4		
Friday, February 22: Submit Assignment 3: testing universals			
Feb 26	Recess Week: No class and no consultant meetings		
Mar 5	Recording	3 (story)	7
	<i>Reading:</i> Bovern 2008 chapter 2		
Mar 12	What we know so far	4 (lexical)	1
	<i>Submit:</i> Assignment 4: summary of findings and paper topic proposal		
Mar 19	Semantic fieldwork	TC + Keely	TC + Keely
	<i>Reading:</i> Matthewson 2004		
Mar 26	Software for fieldwork	5 (story)	2
Apr 2	TBD	6 (lexical)	3
Apr 9	Writing up results	7 (story)	mitcho
	<i>Reading:</i> Noonan 2007		
Apr 16	Presentations		
Friday, April 26 (Reading week): 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 his time. In particular, **no weekly consultant meeting should be canceled or rescheduled, unless requested by the consultant.**

References

- Bowern, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: a practical guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70:369–415.
- 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.
- Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rice, Keren. 2006. Ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork: An overview. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4:123–155.