

Course: LIN 527 Field methods I – Syllabus
Term: Fall 2010
Instructor: Bohnemeyer
Text: Vaux & Cooper 1999 or Vaux, Cooper, & Tucker 2007 (copies of selected chapters will be handed out in class)

Aims of the course: This is the first half of a two-semester course that provides thorough hands-on experience in collecting, processing, and analyzing linguistic data for the purposes of language documentation and description. The course should benefit not only prospective field workers, but any student of linguistics interested in working with primary data other than their own native speaker intuitions.

Procedure: The students will work as a collective under the instructor's supervision, with a native speaker of **Gen** (or **Mina**), a member of the Gbe cluster within the East Kwa (= West Benue-Congo = Volta-Niger) family of languages spoken by a combined 327,000 people in Togo and Benin (Lewis 2009).¹ The goal is to jointly elaborate, over the course of 30 weeks, a sketch of the language, comprising descriptions of the consultant's mental grammar and lexicon and a small text corpus. This joint project will be divided into a sequence of phases, each defined by a set of local goals and methods. For each phase (save the first – see below), each student will be assigned a different task. **Due to the numbers of students enrolled, not every student will be able to elicit each week; so we may need to form teams.** The students will conduct elicitation and analysis sessions with the consultant, which they prepare in consultation with the instructor. All the other students, as well as the instructor, attend these sessions as observers. Afterwards the students process their data. They regularly present their results to in-class discussion and pool data and description in a web archive maintained by the instructor.

Meetings: T/R 16:00-17:30 (elicitation sessions); F 14:00-15:30 (students presenting their results; instruction on methods and theoretical issues) 617 Baldy (The archiving lab)

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Assessment:

- 50% participation, based on written elicitation plans, carrying out elicitation sessions and processing data, written and oral presentation of results, etc.
- participation will be graded at the end of every one of the first four phases of the course
- 50% term project during the final phase of the course, resulting in term paper

Reading: Selected chapters of Vaux & Cooper 1991 and Newman & Ratliff 2001 will be handed out in class. All the books listed in the bibliography below are of course on reserve in the Undergrad Library, and the chapters and articles listed can be downloaded from online reserve.

Weekly workflow: Fridays 14:00-15:30: instruction on theoretical issues (on ethical, epistemological, or technological aspects of field work, the logistics of planning and organizing a field trip, anthropological and sociological issues, etc.); presentations of elicitation results by the

¹ ISO 639-3: gej.

students; planning for the elicitation sessions of the following week. Tuesdays and Thursdays 16:00 – 17:30: elicitation sessions with the native speaker consultant. Students will prepare the sessions, submit a short written script for critique, carry out the elicitation, and afterwards process the data and write up and present the findings in class. All those who are not eliciting during a session are attentive but quiet observers. At the conclusion of each slot there will be a post-mortem analysis of the elicitation sessions.

Syllabus

Phase I – Word lists and phonemic analysis – Week 1-4

T 8/31 Intro, overview * R 9/2 Theory * F 9/3, T 9/7 Elicitation * R 9/9 Rosh Hashanah * F 9/10 Presentations, theory * T 9/14, R 9/16 Elicitation * F 9/17 Presentations, theory * T 9/21, R 9/22 Elicitation * F 9/23 Presentations.

Practice: Wordlists * transcription * rough articulatory sketch of perceived speech sounds * preliminary phonemic analysis * getting started on the lexicon database * ethnography: greetings and farewells

Technology: Transcribing in IPA * making audio and video recordings and digitizing them * setting up a Toolbox lexicon database - *download & install Toolbox 1.5.8; download, unzip, and run Toolbox Training 1.0*

(<http://www.sil.org/computing/toolbox/downloads.htm>) * *To practice your IPA:*
http://www.sil.org/computing/catalog/show_software.asp?id=16

Theory: What is field work? * field work in linguistics and elsewhere in the social sciences * getting started: finding field sites and consultants * framing your objectives for consultants and the community * monolingual vs. bilingual field work * techniques of linguistic data collection * word lists and how to use them * phonemic analysis * broad vs. narrow transcription * from phonetic to (morpho-) phonemic transcription *

Reading: Week 1: Nida 1949: 175-180; Vaux & Cooper 1999: 26-34; 39-49 * *optional/advanced:* Agar 1980: 21-39 (downloadable); Hyman 2001 **Week 2:** Hockett 1958: 102-111; Vaux & Cooper 1999: 61-65; 80-83 * *optional/advanced:* Hale 2001: 76-86; Maddieson 2001: 214-221 **Week 3:** Pike 1975: 67-83 * *optional/advanced:* Pike 1975: 84-115 **Week 4:** Vaux & Cooper 1999: 5-25 * *optional/advanced:* Dimmendaahl 2001: 55-66

Phase II – Simple phrases and sentences – Week 5-7

F 9/23 Theory * T 9/28, R 9/20 Elicitation * F 10/1 Presentations, theory * T 10/5, R 10/7 Elicitation * F 10/8 Presentations, theory * T 10/12, R 10/14 Elicitation * F 10/15 Presentations

Practice: Eliciting simple phrases and sentences on the basis of the word lists * initial assessment of basic clause structure and predication types * first crack at parts of speech and noun/verb inflectional morphology * phonological processes * revising and

expanding the record of the phonology and lexicon * ethnography: greetings and farewells

Theory: Types of elicitation and their pitfalls * elementary syntactic elicitation * escaping Eurocentrism

Reading: Week 5: Elson & Pickett 1988: 65-72; Vaux & Cooper 1999: 115-124; Van Valin 2001: ch. 1 * *optional/advanced:* Gil 2001: 102-122 **Week 6:** Payne 1997: 32-46; 61-62; 69-70; Van Valin 2001: ch. 2 * *optional/advanced:* Hale 2001: 86-95

Phase III – Recorded discourse – Week 8-9

F 10/15 Theory * T 10/19, R 10/21 Elicitation * F 10/22 Presentations, theory * T 10/26, R 10/28 Elicitation * F 10/29 Presentations

Practice: Recording and transcribing a short text (folk tale?) * morphological analysis of the text * setting up the lexicon database for automated morpheme parsing * consolidating and expanding the record of the morphosyntax on the basis of the text * more on (morpho-)phonological processes * revising and expanding the record of the phonology and lexicon * ethnography: transactional speech acts

Technology: Transcribing digitized recordings in ELAN (<http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan>) * Importing transcribed text into a Toolbox project * setting up and using the Toolbox morpheme parser

Theory: Working with recorded texts * morphological analysis * working with the morpheme parser * working with questionnaires

Reading: Week 7: Elson & Pickett 1988: 1-19; Vaux & Cooper 1999: 93-103 * *optional/advanced:* Hale 2001: 95-101 **Week 8:** Elson & Pickett 1988: 41-52; Vaux & Cooper 1999: 104-113 * *optional/advanced:* Chelliah 2001

Phase IV – Questionnaires – Week 10-12

F 10/29 Theory * T 11/2, R 11/4 Elicitation * F 11/5 Presentations, theory * T 11/9, R 11/11 Elicitation * F 11/12 Presentations, theory * T 11/16, R 11/18 Elicitation * F 11/19 Presentations

Practice: Eliciting Dahl's 1985 Tense-Mood-Aspect questionnaire, mainly to get a better grip at noun and verb inflectional morphology * expanding and revising the record of the grammar, lexicon, and phonology on the basis of the findings * eliciting wellformedness judgments on the syntax of verbal and nominal projections * preliminary assessment of grammatical relations * ethnography: politeness (how to make requests or voice criticism depending on who you are talking to)

Theory: Documentation and description defined * the case for documentation * anatomy of a language documentation * the lexicon in description and documentation * folk definitions

Reading: Week 9: Payne 1997: 92-110; Mithun 2001 *optional/advanced*: Himmelmann 1998

Phase V – Term projects – Week 13-15

F 11/19 Theory * T 11/23 Elicitation * R 11/24, F 11/25 Fall recess * T 11/33, R 12/2 Elicitation * F 12/3 Presentations, theory * T 12/7, R 12/9 Elicitation * F 12/10 Presentations, theory * Additional elicitation sessions may be scheduled during Phase V, availability of the speaker permitting * Term projects are due on 12/19

Some suggested topics: elicit, transcribe, and analyze further texts; elicit data with some of the Nijmegen/MesoSpace stimuli and analyze them (e.g., BowPed; Cut & Break; 25 Demonstrative Scenes; ECOM; Ball & Chair; Novel Objects); or pick a topic in Mina grammar or lexicon and work on it eliciting data anyway appropriate!

Theory: planning a field trip * ethical issues

Preview: objectives of the spring semester

- Ethnographic documentation
- Acoustic and articulatory phonetics
- Lexical semantics
- Causal relations and argument structure
- Grammatical relations

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