Functional Linguistics and Language Typology
Anthropology V3906y
Spring 2008, Wednesday, 11:00-12:50
Classroom Number: Barnard Hall 203

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Abstract: This course introduces students to functional linguistics and language typology. Functional linguistics involves describing, classifying and explaining the relation between linguistic form (e.g. various grammatical patterns embodied in phonology, morphology, and syntax) and linguistic function (e.g. the ends communicative utterances serve and the meanings grammatical categories encode). Language typology involves describing and comparing the forms and functions of the world’s languages in order to uncover, classify and explain cross-linguistic patterns.

Recommended Books (at Labyrinth):

Course Packet:
A course packet, containing two dozen classic readings that I will refer you to during the semester, is available at Village Copier (1181 Amsterdam). You should call ahead at least one hour to reserve a packet (666-4777). Most of these readings, like chapters in the recommended books, will be referred to in the lectures and cited in the required works.

A Note on Readings:
The two recommended books were written as quasi-textbooks, and suffer all the problems of such a genre. They should be understood as one possible way to synthesize the material, but certainly not as the final, or even current best synthesis. And lectures will almost never treat them at face-value, but rather take particular paths through them. The readings listed in the syllabus with the expression (recommended) are not required: they are listed to give you a sense of some of the other texts, and ideas and data discussed in lectures, as well as referred to in the readings will be drawn from them. The attached syllabus gives citation information for a range of other articles that we will take up. Finally: the ordering of texts, topics, and so forth is subject to change depending on the general level of student ability (at the moment, you’re all an unknown quantity).

Course Prerequisites: Unless you have taken Language and Culture and/or Introduction to Linguistics, instructor’s permission is required.

Course Requirements: Discussion participation constitutes 20% of your grade. This means you should come to all classes, on time, having done that day’s reading, and being prepared to discuss it. Starred (*) readings and texts are optional—recommended for anyone who is serious about being a linguist, but not required for the purposes of this course. There are weekly problem sets, constituting 30% of your grade. These will present you with various kinds of linguistic data (from a large sample of languages) and ask you to use the data to demonstrate various linguistic patterns and thereby argue for or against various linguistic theories. And there will be final exam. It is worth 50% of your grade.
January 23: Introduction to Functional Linguistics
de Saussure: Selections (assume you’ve already read)
Jakobson: Speech Event and the Functions of Language (assume you’ve already read, but in course packet)
Jakobson: Shifters and Verbal Categories (assume you’ve already read, but in course packet)
VVLP: Chapter 1 (recommended)

January 30: Introduction to Language Typology
Whorf: Grammatical Categories
Greenberg: Some Universals of Grammar... (very difficult: we will come back to it again and again)
C: Chapter 1 (recommended)

January 6: Structural-Descriptive Linguistics and Distributional Analysis (part 1)
Bloomfield: Selections from Language (first half)
O’Grady: Morphology (should be review)

February 13: Structural-Descriptive Linguistics and Distributional Analysis (part 2)
Bloomfield: Selections form Language (second half)
Harris: From Morpheme to Utterance

February 20: Lexical/Grammatical, Nominal/Verbal, Formal/Functional, Overt/Covert (part 1)
Boas: Selections from Handbook of American Indian Languages
Whorf: Grammatical Categories (see January 30)
Whorf: Some Verbal Categories of Hopi

February 27: Lexical/Grammatical, Nominal/Verbal, Formal/Functional, Overt/Covert (part 2)
Talmy: Relation of Grammar to Cognition

March 5: Grammar and Discourse (part 1)
Halliday and Hasan: Nature of Reference in Text and Discourse
Chafe: Language and the Flow of Thought
Sacks et al.: Turns (recommended)

March 12: Grammar and Discourse (part 2)
Du Bois: Discourse and Grammar
Du Bois: Competing Motivations
Harris: Discourse Analysis (recommended)

March 19: Clause Structure and Operator Scope
VVLP: Syntactic Structure (17-81, especially 25-69)
Chomsky: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (recommended)

March 26: Verbal Operators: Aspect and Tense, Mood, Status, Evidentials, and Illocutionary Force
Bull: Time, Tense, and the Verb (recommended)

April 2: Semantic, Pragmatic and Grammatical Relations (part 1)
Fillmore: The Case for Case
VVLP: Semantic Representations (82-138, especially 82-116)
VVLP: Semantic Macroroles (139-154)

April 9: Semantic, Pragmatic, and Grammatical Relations (part 2) (may skip)
Lambrecht: Selections from Information Structure
VVLP: 199-241 (especially 199-214) (recommended)

April 16: Semantic Pragmatic, and Grammatical Relations (part 3)
Nichols: Head-Marking and Depending-Marking Grammar
April 23: Back to Greenberg (part 1)
Greenberg: Some Universal of Grammar with Particular Reference to the Order of Meaningful Elements
Croft: Implicational Universals and Competing Motivations (chapter 3) (recommended)
Croft, Grammatical Categories, Typological Markedness, Economy and Iconicity (chapter 4) (recommended)

April 30: Back to Greenberg (part 2)---->Note: Last Day of Class; all classes end on May 5th
Greenberg: Language Universals, with Special Reference to Feature Hierarchies (selections)
Greenberg: Order of Affixing: a Study in General Linguistics
Croft, Grammatical Hierarchies and the Semantic Map Model (chapter 5) (recommended)

May also make reference to:
Greenberg: A Quantitative Approach to the Morphological Typology of Language (recommended)
Greenburg: Some Methods of Dynamic Comparison in Linguistics (recommended)
Greenburg: Diachrony, Synchrony, and Language Universals (recommended)
Croft: Prototypes and the Interaction of Typological Patterns (chapter 6) (recommended)
Croft: Diachronic Typology (chapter 8) (recommended)

Wednesday, May 14th, 9-12: FINAL EXAM (probably)
Selected Bibliography (will be selectively referred to throughout semester)
Buehler, Karl (1934) Selections from Speech Theory.


Gruber, Jeffrey (1965) Studies in Lexical Relations. PhD Dissertation, MIT.


