LING 21000: Morphology

Instructor: Tran Truong (`trantruong@uchicago.edu`)

Winter 2020

Class Location & Time: Pick 022, T/Th 3:30–4:50
Office Hours: Rosenwald 229, Th 2:00–3:00 (and by appointment)

Course Description

Natural language morphology is the scientific study of form-meaning correspondence in words and sub-word elements. Students will be exposed to common and uncommon processes of word formation across a typologically and genealogically diverse sample of languages. Topics include the morpheme, universals, allomorphy, syncretism, nonconcatenativity, and morphological theory construction. Ample time will also be devoted to experimental, sociolinguistic, and historical perspectives on word-internal structure. This course contains a substantial writing component.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. identify and analyze major morphological processes: inflection, derivation, compounding, encryption, etc.;

2. recognize the theoretical challenges posed by breakdowns at the form-meaning interface: allomorphy, suppletion, homophony, syncretism, etc.;

3. defend their own views of what a desirable morphological theory should look like;

4. describe data from unfamiliar and understudied languages in an empirically adequate way, in both oral and written form.

Prerequisites

LING 20001 - Introduction to Linguistics

Required Materials

All readings will be posted on Canvas.

Grading

5%	Participation & attendance	
40%	4 problem sets	(due weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8)
5%	5 Canvas discussion posts	(due weeks 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9)
5%	Research awareness	(due week 9)
5%	Reading quiz	(week 10)
40%	In-class final examination (week 10)	**OR** final paper (due week 11)

Participation & attendance

I practice cold calling to ensure the full participation of all students. This is a good way for me to master your names. It also makes it easy for me to give everyone full points for this grading component at the end of the quarter. Please speak to me individually if cold calling makes you anxious or uncomfortable, and we can figure out an alternative solution. You will always be able to skip your turn when called upon by saying *Pass*.

Punctuality: Barring exceptional circumstances, I pledge to begin and end class on the hour. This means that you should arrive a few minutes early and be ready to start right at 3:30. This also means that you are free to leave as soon as class ends, even if I am in the middle of a sentence. I reserve the right to deduct points for habitual tardiness and absence.

Problem sets

Four problem sets will be assigned throughout the quarter. Points will be awarded for empirical and theoretical adequacy, clarity and organization, and originality. A rubric will be provided with the first assignment.

Style: Write your solutions in full prose. It will never be acceptable to simply state the name of a phenomenon or propose a morphophonological rule without accompanying explanatory text. If a question consists of multiple parts, your response need not answer each part in order, but you must answer all parts. If you refer to an external source (although, strictly speaking, this should never be necessary), it must be cited in a bibliography following a standard style guide.

Collaboration: In general, the Department of Linguistics encourages collaboration between students for problem sets, provided that you write the names of your collaborators at the top of your submission. My questions invite original thinking and will always have multiple correct/acceptable answers. I worry that widespread collaboration will reduce the diversity of responses, in ways that will limit both your creativity and the flow of class discussion. Although I will not forbid students from working together, I ask you not to be too swayed by the analyses of your collaborators.

Late work: No late work can be accepted, as we will discuss the solutions in class on the day that the problem sets are due.

Canvas discussion posts

On odd-numbered weeks, you will submit a Canvas post. On week 1, this will be a self-introduction. On weeks 3, 5, 7, and 9, your post can take the form of a response to a reading, a response to another student's post, a 'morphology in the wild' report, or a research awareness report (see below). Posts should be at minimum 300–500 words.

Research awareness

At some point during the quarter, you must show some engagement with current research. One way to do this is to attend a colloquium, workshop, or film screening, for which the topic is something relevant to language and/or linguistics. You will then write a Canvas discussion post summarizing what you learned, in a way that would be accessible to a student who was not present. I encourage you to finish this requirement as soon as possible, as more events are scheduled earlier in the quarter than later.

A second way is to submit an abstract to an conference. Acceptable venues include the 14th Annual Cornell Undergraduate Linguistics Colloquium, the Great Lakes Expo for Experimental & Formal Undergraduate Linguistics, and the Chicago-Area Undergraduate Research Symposium. Anyone who chooses this option will also be exempt from one problem set. If you need help finding appropriate talks or writing your abstract, please schedule a meeting with me.

Reading quiz

On Tuesday of week 10, we will have a short reading quiz. This will be a simple matching quiz and is not expected to take longer than 5–10 minutes.

Final examination OR paper

Students have the choice between an in-class final examination, held on Thursday of week 10, or a final paper, due on Thursday of week 11.

Final examination: The examination consists of three parts.

- Commentary on seen data (30%): You will answer some questions on a data set given to you on Tuesday of week 10.

- Commentary on unseen data (30%): You will answer some questions on a data set never before shown to you.

- Free response (40%): You will write short essays on larger questions related to the major themes of the course.

Final paper: If you write a paper, you will not have to attend class on Thursday of week 10. The paper will be 10–15 pages, double-spaced, and about some topic of your choice relevant to natural language morphology. In order to qualify for this option, you must choose a topic by week 5, and commit to giving an informal 5-minute presentation on your paper on Tuesday of week 10.

Schedule

Topics may be extended or clipped based on student background and interest. Please come to class *having already read* the assigned reading for a particular day. Do not worry about understanding everything! We will take all the time we need in class to unpack any parts that were difficult to grasp.

Week 1: Desiderata of a theory of morphology

Jan 7 (T) Healy, Kieran. 2017. Fuck nuance. *Sociological Theory* 35(2):118–127.

OPTIONAL: Henrich, Joseph, *et al*. 2010. The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral & Brain Sciences* 33(2–3):61–135.

Jan 9 (Th) Goldsmith, John. 2019. American descriptivist morphology in the 1950s. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*.

OPTIONAL: Kotek, Hadas, *et al*. 2020. Gender representation in linguistic example sentences. Presentation at the 94th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.

Canvas post #1 due 11:59pm, Jan 8 (W).

Week 2: Principles of morphological analysis

Jan 14 (T) Haspelmath, Martin & Andrea Sims. 2010. *Understanding Morphology*, 2nd edition. London: Hodder Education. **Chapters 1–2**.

OPTIONAL: Harris, Zellig. 1942. Morpheme alternants in linguistic analysis. *Language* 18(3):169–180.

FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS: Embick, David. 2015. *The Morpheme: A Theoretical Introduction*. Berlin: de Gruyter. **Chapters 1–2**.

Jan 16 (Th) Haspelmath & Sims 2010. **Chapters 3–4**.

OPTIONAL: Hockett, Charles F. 1954. Two models of grammatical description. *Word* 10(2–3):210–234.

Problem set #1 due 3:29pm, Jan 16 (Th).

Week 3: Morphological typology

Jan 21 (T) Sapir, Edward. 1921. *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company. **Chapter 6**.

OPTIONAL: Baker, Mark C. 1996. *The Polysynthesis Parameter*. Oxford University Press. **Chapter 11**.

Jan 23 (Th) Greenberg, Joseph H. 1966. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. In *Universals of Human Language*, 2nd edition, 73–113. Cambridge: MIT Press. **Section 4 & Appendix III**.

OPTIONAL: Bisang, Walter. 2015. Hidden complexity—the neglected side of complexity & its implications. *Linguistics Vanguard* 1(1):177–187.

Canvas post #2 due 11:59pm, Jan 19 (Su).

Week 4: Syncretism

Jan 28 (T) Harley, Heidi. 2008. When is a syncretism more than a syncretism? Impoverishment, metasyncretism, & underspecification. In *Phi Theory: Phi-features across Modules & Interfaces*, eds. Daniel Harbour *et al*., 251–294.

OPTIONAL: Haspelmath & Sims 2010. **Chapter 8, Section 6.**

Jan 30 (Th) Baerman, Matthew. 2004. Directionality & (un)natural classes in syncretism. *Language* 80(4):807–827.

Problem set #2 due 3:29pm, Jan 30 (Th).

Week 5: Contiguity

Feb 4 (T) Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 2012. *Universals in Comparative Morphology: Suppletion, Superlatives, & the Structure of Words*. Cambridge: MIT Press. **Chapter 2**.

Feb 6 (Th) Caha, Pavel. 2017. How (not) to derive a *ABA: The case of Blansitt's generalisation. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 2(1):1–32.

Canvas post #3 due 11:59pm, Feb 2 (Su).

Week 6: Experimental (Germanic) morphology

Feb 11 (T)   Kemps, Rachèl J. J. K., *et al*. 2005. Prosodic cues for morphological complexity: The case of Dutch plural nouns. *Memory & Cognition* 33(3):430–446.

OPTIONAL: Keshav 2016. How to read a paper. Ms.

Feb 13 (Th)   Schuster, Swetlana. 2016. Hidden morphology: Decomposition & processing of German complex nouns. In *Proceedings of the 52nd Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, eds. Jessica Kantarovich *et al.*, 453–468.

Problem set #3 due 3:29pm, Feb 13 (Th).

Week 7: Sincatenative morphology

Feb 18 (T)   McCarthy, John. 1981. A prosodic theory of nonconcatenative morphology. *Linguistic Inquiry* 12(3):373–418.

Feb 20 (Th)   Nitz, Eike, & Sebastian Nordhoff. 2010. Subtractive plural morphology in Sinhala. In *Rara & Rarissima: Collecting & Interpreting Unusual Characteristics of Human Languages*, eds. Jan Wohlgemuth & Michael Cysouw, 247–66.

OPTIONAL: Haspelmath, Martin & Andres Karjus. 2017. Explaining asymmetries in number marking: Singulatives, pluratives, & usage frequency. *Linguistics* 55(6):1213–1235.

Canvas post #4 due 11:59pm, Feb 16 (Su).

Week 8: Expanding the morphological canon

Feb 25 (T)   Emmorey, Karen & David Corina. 1990. Lexical recognition in sign language: Effects of phonetic structure and morphology. *Perceptual & Motor Skills* 71(3):1227–1252. (**Guest lecturer**: Dr. Ryan Lepic.)

Feb 27 (Th)   Konnelly, Lex & Elizabeth Cowper. 2020. Gender diversity & morphosyntax: An account of singular *they*. Ms.

OPTIONAL: Mahowald, Kyle, *et al*. 2016. SNAP judgments: A small N acceptability paradigm (SNAP) for linguistic acceptability judgments. *Language* 92(3):619–63.

Problem set #4 due 3:29pm, Feb 27 (Th).

Week 9: Historical morphology

Mar 3 (T)   Givón, Talmy. 1971. Historical syntax & synchronic morphology: An archaeologist's field trip. In *Proceedings of the 7th Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, eds. Douglas Adams, *et al.*, 394–415.

Mar 5 (Th)   Stewart Jr, Thomas W. 2004. Lexical imposition: Old Norse vocabulary in Scottish Gaelic. *Diachronica* 21(2):393–420.

Canvas post #5 & research awareness requirement due 11:59pm, Mar 1 (Su).

Week 10: Summative assessments

Mar 10 (T)   Reading quiz & final presentations

Mar 12 (Th)   Final examination

Final paper due 11:59pm, Mar 19 (Th).

Territorial Acknowledgment

This course meets on the homelands of the *Niswi-mishkodewinan*, an alliance between the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi. The State of Illinois is also home to the Ho-Chunk, Inoka, Menominee, Meskwaki, Miami, and Sauk. Many concepts in theoretical morphology, including the foundational *morpheme,* have been proposed on the basis of research conducted with these peoples. The Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago is strongly committed to the training of indigenous linguists.

Course Policies

Technology

I encourage students to print out materials in advance to minimize the in-class use of laptops and mobile devices. Some students may have access needs and/or politico-moral commitments that necessitate the use of technology. Those of you without such needs or commitments should consider that the discussion-based classroom is one of the last discourse contexts in which you can choose to be fully (or mostly!) removed from the virtual world.

Access

If you have an access need that could be met by means of a reasonable accommodation, let me know. You do not need to discuss with me the nature of your disability. You do not need to file your disability with the university. Your access need may not be related or reducible to a medical(ized) disability at all. None of these factors will limit your eligibility to request an accommodation. I am personally and deeply invested in your human flourishing in the context of this course, whether or not your access needs are legible or legitimate to the university bureaucracy and/or the medical establishment.

E-mail

I am a millennial and will be *extremely* available by e-mail. E-mails that contain a formal salutation (*Dear Tran*) and valediction (*Sincerely*) will be responded to the moment they are received (although if I am using my mobile device, I may not use the salutation and valediction myself). Less formal e-mails will be responded to within twenty-four (24) hours.

Malpractice

Plagiarism (i.e., taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own) and collusion (i.e., letting someone else pass off your work as their own) are serious cases of malpractice and shall be dealt with pursuant to university policy. Source mal- and misattribution, while less serious if done unintentionally, also constitute malpractice. I strive not to view these behaviors as a moral failing, nor as a reflection of a student's character: this is why I reject the terms *academic honesty* and *academic integrity*. Rather, I view them as a failure of socialization into the discursive norms of the linguistics community. Such norms can at times be opaque, arbitrary, and even unproductive: if your understanding of them is hazy—or if your rejection of them is principled—I strongly encourage you to meet with me.

Resources

- **College Writing Tutors**: https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/writing-support/ccwt/

- **Writing Tutors** specializing in students for whom English is an additional language: https://esl.uchicago.edu/one-on-one/

- **Center for College Student Success** for students from first-generation, lower-income, and/or immigrant backgrounds: https://college.uchicago.edu/student-services/center-college-student-success/

- **Sexual Assault Dean-on-Call**, available 24/7: 777-834-HELP

- Ordained Religious Advisors at the **Office of Spiritual Life**: 773-702-2100

- **Student Health Service**: 773-702-4156

- **Student Counseling Service**: 773-702-9800