Ling 795 Seminar: Language Universals

Schedule # 22116
Fall 2017
Th 4:00pm–6:40pm
Room HH-128

The question of language universals has been a central theme of linguistic research though the second half of the 20th century. The two main approaches to universals were founded by Joseph Greenberg with the 1961 Dobbs Ferry conference on univerisals, and by Noam Chomsky with his publication of *Syntactic Structures* and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* at around the same time. In this seminar, we will look at these two views of universals and how they have developed and influence each other. Specific topics and readings will depend on the interests of participants.

Instructor

Rob Malouf
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Requirements

The goals of this course are for participants to gain experience in:

- understanding competing views of linguistic universals and their applications in theoretical and descriptive linguistics,

- reading and evaluating the primary literature,

- presenting and discussing research material with peers,

- identifying open research questions,

- applying descriptive and theoretical concepts to novel linguistic data.

Through the term, participants (including auditors!) will present and discuss articles from the reading list, which cover a number of aspects of universals.

In addition to leading and participating in discussions, students taking the class for a grade will also prepare a final research project. The final grade will be based on class participation and on the final project

General policies

- No form of academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism, will be tolerated in the class. Following Executive Order 1006, all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for investigation. For more information about the judicial process, see `http://csrr.sdsu.edu`. For more information about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see `http://its.sdsu.edu/tech/plagiarism.html`.

- No one may record lectures or class discussions without prior permission. Students who make recordings without permission can be reported for misconduct.

- If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

- The CSU has affirmed its commitment to "protecting access, affordability, intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all students ... including supporting DACA students." Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status and other categories of identity is prohibited. If you have concerns about your status at the university, please visit `http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/EOP/` for information or contact the Dean of Students or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in your College.

Schedule

Week 1: Introdution

- Aginsky, Burt W. and Ethel G. Aginsky. 1948. "The importance of language universals." *Word* 4:68-172.

- Greenberg, Joseph H., Charles Osgood, and James Perkins. 1966. "Memorandum concerning language universals." In Greenberg, J. (ed.) *Universals of Language.* MIT Press.

Week 2: Dobbs Ferry Conference

- Hockett, Charles F. 1961. "The problem of universals in language." In Greenberg (ed.) *Universals of Language.*

- Greenberg, Joseph H.. 1961. "Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements." In Greenberg (ed.) *Universals of Language.*

Week 3–4: Sampling

- Bell, Alan. 1978. "Language samples." In Greenberg, et al. (eds.), *Universals of Human Languages,* Volume 1, Stanford University Press.

- Dryer, Matthew S. 1992. "The Greenbergian word order correlations." *Language* 68:81-138.

Week 5: Phonology

- Maddieson, I. 1991. "Testing the universality of phonological generalizations with a phonetically specified segment database: Results and limitations." *Phonetica* 48:193–206.

- Hyman, L. 2008. "Universals in phonology." *The Linguistic Review* 25:83-137.

Week 6–7: Universal Grammar

- Chomsky, N. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding.* Foris. Chapter 1.

- Jackendoff, R. 2002. *Foundations of Language.* Oxford. Chapter 4.

- Hauser, M., N. Chomsky, and T. Fitch. 2002. "The faculty of language: What is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?" *Science* 298:1569–1579.

Week 8–11: Myth of Universals

- Evans, N. and S. Levinson. 2009. "The myth of language universals: language diversity and its importance for cognitive science." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32(5):429-48.

Week 12–15: Color terms

- Kay, P. and C. K. McDaniel. "The linguistic significance of the meanings of basic color terms." *Language* 54:610-646.

- Levinson, S. C. 2000. "Yélî Dnye and the theory of basic color terms." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10:3–55.

- Debi Roberson, Ian Davies, and Jules Davidoff. 2000. "Color categories are not universal: Replications and new evidence from a stone-age culture." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 129: 369-398.

- Paul Kay and Terry Regier. 2007. "Color naming universals: The case of Berinmo." *Cognition* 102: 289–298

Week 16: Student presentations