

Spanish, Portuguese and the Nature of Language

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Office Hours: Monday 2:30PM-4:30PM, or by appointment

Course Description:

Introduction to what is known about the Human Language with an emphasis on Spanish and Portuguese data. We will explore the nature of Language –what it means to know a language, how it differs from other animal systems of communication, and common misconceptions about Language and the field of Linguistics. We will critically examine the different features of language structure –phonology, morphology, and syntax; as well as various psycholinguistic aspects of language, including first and second language acquisition, bilingualism, language loss, language and the brain, and how language interacts with other cognitive domains.

Course Objectives:

The main objective of the course is to help students develop critical thinking skills and to understand arguments based on linguistic evidence. We will discuss findings about language structure, and how they bear on issues related to language acquisition, language use, and the biological basis for language.

Lecture:

Following evidence-based pedagogical guidelines for remote teaching, lectures will be *asynchronous* – they will be pre-recorded, divided up into smaller chunks, and posted on CCLE for you to watch at a most convenient time. You are expected to watch the week's videos and do the week's readings *before* you attend Section. Note lecture videos will have quizzes embedded in them (see more in Participation).

Section:

Sections will be led by:

Isabel Benvenuti

isabelben@g.ucla.edu

1A - T 9:00am-9:50am

1B - T 10:00am-10:50am

Gemma Repiso-Puigdelliura

grepisopu@ucla.edu

1C - Th 9:00am-9:50am

1D - Th 10:00am-10:50am

Sections will be *synchronous* (live on Zoom) and will give you (more) hands-on experience with the topics covered in lecture. Because recording has been shown to discourage participation,

sections will *not* be recorded. Thus, it is *strongly* recommended you attend, as participation will constitute part of your grade (see more in Participation).

- Meeting ID for sections: **923 0477 3776**
- Passcode: **spanm35**

Course Materials: Lecture recordings, slides, assignments, and any extra materials will be posted on the course website:

<https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/21W-PORTGSEM35-1>

- Required book:
An Introduction to Language (11th edition) by Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams
- Optional (but highly recommended) book:
The Language Instinct (any edition) by Steven Pinker

Course Requirements:

All students are expected to do the assigned readings, watch all lecture videos, attend and participate in section, and return the assigned work by the due dates and times.

- **Exams:** There are 2 timed, closed-book, *non*-cumulative exams that cover material from lectures and readings. You will be given a window of 24h to complete each exam, but 2h from the moment you start until you finish it.

Exam dates: #1: Friday, February 5 (week 5)

#2: Friday, March 19 (Finals Week)

- **Homeworks:**

(i) Each assignment will be worth between 5-10% of your final grade.

(ii) Assignments must be completed through Gradescope (CCLE).

- Your Gradescope login is your university email, and your password can be changed:
https://www.gradescope.com/reset_password

- Class code: 3YJ6J6

(i) Late assignments will not be accepted except for legitimate reasons (e.g., sickness, injury, loss of relative), in which case an extension may be given if asked *in advance*. Evidence of your excuse may be requested.

(ii) If a question requires technical notation (e.g., syntactic tree analyses), that portion may be hand-written, photographed, and uploaded as a file. Alternatively, you may use the software TreeForm and upload the image in the corresponding questions.

(iii) While I encourage you to discuss class material with one another, you must do your homework on your own. This will help you gauge how well you understand the lectures and readings, and also prepare you for the exams. If I suspect you have copied an assignment from anywhere, you will receive a zero for that assignment and you may be reported to the Dean of Student Affairs.

- **Participation:** Attendance *and* participation constitute 9% of your final grade.
 - Quizzes embedded in the video lectures (5%): Quizzes will not be graded, just counted as complete or incomplete, and must be completed before Tuesday at 9am (except Week 1).
 - Attendance and participation in the synchronic sessions (4%). If there is a reasonable excuse for missing lecture, please, let us know before lecture. If you are not able to attend the synchronic sessions due to time zone differences or other legitimate reasons, please contact me and your TA as soon as possible.
- **Extra credit:** You may earn up to 4% of extra credit by participating in Linguistic experiments (if you qualify) or by completing the alternative assignments available here: <https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/spanport-linguistics?section=5>
 - 30min-long experiment = 1%
 - 1h-long experiment = 2%
- **Spanish and/or Portuguese:** Knowledge of Spanish and/or Portuguese is not required, but illustrative examples will tend to be drawn from these languages.

Final grade breakdown:

- Exam 1 23%
- Exam 2 23%
- Homework 45%
- Participation 9%

Students with Special Needs

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255 within the first two weeks of the term, as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit: www.cae.ucla.edu.

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UCLA Student Conduct Code:

<https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Individual-Student-Code#unauthsalusemater14>

Class syllabus:

NB: Dates and coverage are subject to change.

*Mandatory readings

Week	Topic	Assignments
1	<p>Course Introduction. What is the Nature of Language? <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 1; Pinker – Ch. 1, 3, & 11</i></p>	HW1 - Nature of Language (5%), due T 1/12 by 9am.
2	<p>Morphology: Morphemes and word formation rules <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 2; Pinker – Ch. 5</i></p>	HW2 – Morphology (5%), due T 1/19 by 9am.
3	<p>Syntax: Constituency, Phrase Structure, Movement</p>	HW3 – Syntax and Semantics (10%) due T 2/2 by 9am.
4	<p>Syntax Cont'd <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 3; Pinker – Ch. 4 & 7</i> Semantics <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 4 (Sections: Compositional Semantics, Lexical Semantics)</i></p>	
5	<p>Pragmatics <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 4 (Section: Pragmatics)</i> Th. 2/4 – Zoom Townhall: Review F. 2/5 – Exam 1</p>	
6	<p>Phonetics <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 5; Pinker – Ch. 6</i></p>	HW4 – Phonetics (5%) due T 2/16 by 9am.
7	<p>Phonology <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 6</i></p>	HW 5 – Phonology (10%) due T 2/23 by 9am.
8	<p>Language acquisition: Stages in L1 acquisition and theories of language acquisition</p>	HW 6 – Language Acquisition (10%) due T 3/9 by 9am.
9	<p>Language acquisition Cont'd <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 9; Pinker – Ch. 2 & 9</i> <i>Viewing: Acquiring the Human Language</i> L2 acquisition, Bilingualism, Heritage Languages <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 7 (Section: Bilingualism), Ch. 9 (Section: Knowing more than one language)</i></p>	
10	<p>Biological Bases of Language: The Critical Period, Pidgins and Creoles, Language Disorders and the Brain <i>Readings: *Intro – Ch. 7 (Section: Contact Languages, Creoles and Creolization); *Intro – Ch. 10; Pinker – Ch. 10</i> Th. 3/11 – Zoom Townhall: Review</p>	
Finals	F. 3/19 - Exam 2	

Course Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course you should have acquired mastery of the following concepts and skills:

- 1) Explain the concept of Language as a system of knowledge present in the mind of the individual speakers.
- 2) Describe the difference between the knowledge that the speaker has of his language (competence) and the use that he makes of this knowledge in daily life (performance).
- 3) Distinguish between Human Language and communication systems of other species.
- 4) Ability to segment different morphemes and identify word-formation processes.
- 5) Ability to apply (recursive) Phrase Structure Rules to construct different syntactic representations for Spanish/Portuguese/English sentences.
- 6) Understand the difference between the more abstract underlying representation of a sentence (D-structure) and the closer-to-surface representation of a sentence (S-structure).
- 7) Ability to apply at least three transformational rules (V-to-T, T-to-C, and wh-movement) to derive the S-structure of Spanish/Portuguese/English sentences from their corresponding D-structures.
- 8) Be able to transcribe in IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).
- 9) Describe vowels and consonants in terms of articulatory phonetics.
- 10) Distinguish between basic sounds (phonemes) and derived sounds (allophones) by applying tests (Minimal Pair and Complementary Distribution).
- 11) Construct phonological derivations in which underlying phonemic representations are mapped onto phonetic representations by application of ordered phonological rules.
- 12) Be familiar with different hypotheses of language acquisition (e.g., nativist vs. cognitivist).
- 13) Describe at least three important stages of language acquisition.
- 14) Describe the concept of the Critical Period for language acquisition and be familiar with case studies that provide evidence for it.
- 15) Ability to describe the evidence for the idea that language represents a module in the brain.
- 16) Describe areas of the brain specialized for language, and types of aphasia resulting from damage to these areas.