

# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *History of Linguistics as a discipline - 10804*

*Last update 22-07-2018*

*HU Credits: 2*

*Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)*

*Responsible Department: School of Language Sciences*

*Academic year: 0*

*Semester: 2nd Semester*

*Teaching Languages: Hebrew*

*Campus: Mt. Scopus*

*Course/Module Coordinator: Malka Hovav*

*Coordinator Email: [malkahovav@gmail.com](mailto:malkahovav@gmail.com)*

*Coordinator Office Hours: Before or after class or by appointment*

*Teaching Staff:*

Course/Module description:

*It is customary to define linguistics as the scientific study of language. In this way, linguistics is said to be different from other fields dealing with language which do not aspire to be scientific. And indeed, many have taken linguistics to be the paradigm of scientific study of human behavior. However, from the dawn of modern linguistics, there have been many disputes concerning what exactly constitutes the scientific study of language. Much of Chomsky's thought is devoted to an examination of the goals and appropriate methods of the scientific study of language. Despite the fact that it is common to say that Chomsky brought about a revolution in linguistics, he sees himself as a follower of seventeenth century thinkers, the rationalist philosophers.*

*In the first part of this course, we will study basic notions in Chomsky's approach to the study of language. We will sketch the basic concepts Chomsky has employed over the years. Despite the fact that his theory has undergone radical changes over the years (he began his academic activity in the early 1950's) his basic approach, with the definition of the goals of the scientific study of language, and the basic methodology have not changed much. In the next part of the course, we will review the beginnings of the scientific study of language in the nineteenth century in order to place Chomsky's thought in a wider context. We will see how the first generations of linguists conceived of their activity as scientists and how this was different from earlier academic approaches to language. Then we will focus on American linguistics. The first generations of linguists focused on striking differences between languages, in striking contrast to Chomsky's focus on linguistic universals. We will then focus on structuralist linguistics, who were deeply influenced by then current ideas in psychology and philosophy. These were the linguists whose theories Chomsky immediately responded to and criticized. We will study Chomsky's critique of these theories, which served as the basis for the revolution said to have been wrought in linguistics. Finally, we will return to Chomsky's theories and methodology which have recently been brought under severe attack. We will examine these critiques and become familiar with other approaches. It is important to stress, however, that most of Chomsky's current critics, criticize the answers and the methodology for providing answers to questions which Chomsky himself posed as being central to linguistics. In this way, many of his critics are still part and parcel of the revolution.*

Course/Module aims:

*To become familiar with main themes, questions and concepts which have shaped the history of linguistics from de Saussure to Chomsky and his modern critics.*

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Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

*Read and understand excerpts from foundational literature in linguistics in different historical periods.*

Attendance requirements(%):

100

*Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Careful reading of texts and discussion of these texts in class.*

Course/Module Content:

*Weeks 1- 3 Overview of Chomskian ideas:*

- ☐ *What is the object of inquiry? If we want to study language, where can we find it in order to study it?*
- ☐ *Senses of the term "language": as a social/cultural product; as a physical phenomenon; as part of individual psychology.*
- ☐ *Knowledge of language as object of inquiry*
- ☐ *Knowledge as a mental state; universal grammar as an initial state*
- ☐ *Poverty of stimulus argument*
- ☐ *Competence/performance*
- ☐ *Basic properties of language that we want to get at: discrete infinity*

**READINGS:**

*Lecture notes*

*Chomsky: Reflections on Language pp. 1-13;*

*Aspects pp. 3-15;*

*Pinker: Words and Rules pp. 1-9;*

*(optional: Knowledge of Language Chapters 1 and 2).*

*Week 4 The beginnings of the scientific study of "Language," as a general phenomenon. De Saussure and his dichotomies: diachronic vs. synchronic linguistics; langue, language, parole;*

*Readings:*

*De Saussure, Ferdinand Course in General Linguistics, chapters 1- 4. Hebrew, English and French versions will be available*

*Week 5 Historical antecedents to the controversy on universalism vs. linguistic relativity; beginnings of American linguistics: Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf.*

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*Readings:*

*Sapir, Edward: Language: chapter 1 (optional)*

*Sapir, Edward, "The Grammarian and his Language"*

*Sapir, Edward, "The Status of Linguistics as a Science."*

*Whorf, Benjamin Lee (1940) "Science and Linguistics" (available in English and Hebrew)*

*Weeks 6 - 7 American Structuralism's extreme version of empiricism; empiricism vs. rationalism.*

*Readings:*

*Bloomfield, Leonard Language Chapters 1, 2.*

*Bloomfield. Leonard "Linguistics as a Science,"*

*Bloomfield, Leonard "Language or Ideas?" (optional)*

*Norbert Hornstein "Empiricism and Rationalism as Research Strategies"*

*Weeks 8 - 9 Chomsky's critique of post-Bloomfieldian structuralism*

*Readings:*

*Chomsky, Noam "A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior" Sections: 1-5; pick up in the middle of section 11*

*Chomsky, Noam "Linguistics and Cognitive Science: Problems and Mysteries." pp. 39-41*

*Lees, Robert "Review of Chomsky (1957) Syntactic Structures", excerpts*

*Week 10 Evaluation of grammars vs. discovery procedures: Level of Adequacy:*

*Reading:*

*Chomsky, Noam Syntactic Structures, chapter 6*

*Weeks 11 - 12 Problems with phonemics*

*Reading:*

*Dresher, Elan. "Chomsky and Halle's revolution in phonology"*

*Weeks 13- 14 Alternative views of Language Universals and Language Acquisition*

*Readings:*

*David Lightfoot "Plato's problem, UG and the Language Organ"*

*Tomasello, Michael "Language is not an instinct."*

*Evans, Nicholas and Stephen Levinson "The Myth of Language Universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science," Behavioral and Brain Sciences (in press); excerpts*

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Required Reading:

- Bloomfield, Leonard (1933) *Language*, Holt, Reinhart and Winston.
- Bloomfield, Leonard "Linguistics as a Science," in *A Leonard Bloomfield Anthology*, Charles Hockett, ed. Indiana University Press.
- Bloomfield, Leonard, "Language or Ideas?" in *A Leonard Bloomfield Anthology*, Charles Hockett, ed. Indiana University Press
- Chomsky, Noam (1957) *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton.
- Chomsky, Noam (1959) "A Review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*" in Leon A. Jakobovits and Murray S. Miron (eds.), *Readings in the Psychology of Language*, Prentice-Hall, 1967,
- Chomsky, Noam (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, MIT Press
- Chomsky, Noam (1975) *Reflections on Language*. Pantheon Books. pp. 1-13;
- Chomsky, Noam (1986) *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use*, Praeger
- Chomsky, Noam (1991) "Linguistics and Cognitive Science: Problems and Mysteries." in *The Chomskyan Turn*, A. Kasher, ed. Blackwell.
- Dresher, Elan. (2005) "Chomsky and Halle's revolution in phonology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky*, James McGilvray, ed. Cambridge University Press.
- Evans, Nicholas and Stephen Levinson "The Myth of Language Universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science," in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (2009)
- Hockett, Charles (1942) "A System of Descriptive Phonology," *Language*, Vol. 18, No. 1
- Hornstein, Norbert (2005) "Empiricism and Rationalism as Research Strategies", in *The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky*, James McGilvray, ed. Cambridge University Press.
- Lees, Robert (1957) "Review of Chomsky (1957) *Syntactic Structures*", *Language* 33.3
- Pinker, Steven (1999) *Words and Rules*, Perrenial
- Sapir, Edward: (1921) *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, Harcourt, Brace and World
- Sapir, Edward (1929) "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," *Language* 5
- Sapir, Edward (1924) "The Grammarian and his Language," in *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*, David Mandelbaum, ed. University of California Press.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de, (1955) *Course in General Linguistics*
- Tomasello, Michael. (1995) "Language is not an instinct." *Cognitive Development* 10:131-156.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee (1940) "Science and Linguistics," in *Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality*, (1956) MIT Press.

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Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 70 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 0 %

Project work 0 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 30 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information: