

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

English 227: Introduction to Language
09:30 – 10:45 TR
Room 313 Fisk Hall
Spring 2015

Professor K. Shaaban
Office: 205 Fisk Hall
Office Hours: W 11:00 -12:30
or by Appointment

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to present students with the fundamental conceptual foundations of language study. Students will gain a broad understanding of human language as a complex biological system as well as a social construct. They will also develop awareness and appreciation of the diversity of language systems as well as their basic similarities by getting a basic understanding of most aspects of language study. As the course progresses, students will acquire some and apply tools and techniques for linguistic analysis, consequently using them to discover some of the organizing principles of language. They will be trained to approach all the factual claims made in this course in an inquisitive, critical manner.

The course covers the following major topics: the nature of human linguistic communication and language universals; grammatical aspects of language (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics); social aspects of language (language variation, writing systems, and language change); cognitive aspects of language (pragmatics, psycholinguistics, language acquisition, neurolinguistics, and language processing); and the relation of linguistics to other fields (such as the fields of literature, education, text analysis, anthropology, and philosophy).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

1. Define language in terms of code and use;
2. Explain the relation between language and the brain, citing research evidence;
3. Analyze sound, word, and sentence structure of English and Arabic;
4. Discover patterns and rules that govern the operation of the various aspects of language;
5. Compare first to language acquisition to second language learning in terms of manner, order, and stages of acquisition;

6. Provide explanation for the process of linguistic change in time and space and justify conclusions;
7. Evaluate the process of borrowing words and expressions into a language and its impact on the form and content of that language.

Required Textbook

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R. & Hymas, N. (2014). *An Introduction to language*. 10th Edition (International). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

In addition to this basic textbook, materials and activities from other textbooks listed under “references” will be used for reinforcement or for presentation of topics not covered adequately in the required textbook.

Evaluation of Students’ Performance

Exercises, Projects, and Activities (Class work, library work, and homework)	15%
First Test	25%
Second Test	30%
Final Examination	30%

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Those who miss **FOUR** or more class sessions, no matter what their excuses are, will be dropped automatically from the class. Needless to say, you will be held responsible for any materials covered during your absence. Participation in this course can be satisfied by contributing to the discussion in class and by asking significant questions. You are also encouraged to communicate with me by e-mail and stop by my office if you want to discuss issues related to the course readings/assignments.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to uphold AUB’s Code of Student Conduct (see Student Handbook Appendix). Note that both cheating and plagiarism are violations of the University’s academic conduct regulations and are subject to disciplinary action, which might lead to a Dean’s warning, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

Course Schedule

Unit	Topics	Activities
1	Introduction and overview of course requirements The nature of language READINGS: PINKER CHAPTER 1 FROMKIN ET. AL. INTRO.	Collecting examples of verbal and non-verbal communication stressing suggestive signs vs. conventional signs
2	The words of language READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 1	Essay comparing old and new dictionaries
3	Sentence patterns (1) READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 2	
3	Sentence patterns (2)	Analysis of sentences in Arabic and English stressing universals in grammar
3	Sentence patterns (3)	TEST I
4	The meaning of language READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 3	Collecting new words and new meanings that have entered the language of the field of specializations of students
5	The sound system of language FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 5	Consonant and Vowel charts for language/dialect spoken by student
6	Language acquisition READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 7	
7	Language processing: Humans and Computers(1) READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 8	Essay relating to methods of investigating relation between language and the brain
7	Language processing (2)	TEST II
8	Writing and Literacy FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 11	Charts of Phoenician and Greek alphabets
9	Language in society READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 9	Collecting college slang word and analyzing language in advertisement
10	Language Change READINGS: FROMKIN ET. AL. CHAPTER 10	TEST III

REFERENCES

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Suggested English 227 Project Assignments

A. *Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication*

1. Identify and present five signs that suggest their meanings
2. Identify and present five conventional signs

B. *Dictionaries*

1. Identify two dictionaries in the library
2. Explain how they differ in terms of:
 - a. basis for choice of order of meaning
 - b. content organization
 - c. format
 - d. goals and functions
3. Identify two specialized dictionaries
4. Explain the following:
 - a. their purpose
 - b. their audience

C. *Jargon*

1. Identify some of the popularized register of certain professions or fields of study, social movements, media forms, etc.
 - a. New words
 - b. Old words, new meanings
 - c. Revival of old meanings
 - d. Borrowed terms
2. Explain the motivation for such changes

Areas Recommended for Research

New vocabulary and new meanings introduced as a result of:

1. Increase in ethnic awareness
2. Women's studies
3. Social movements (hippies, yuppies, hard rock, rednecks, etc.)
4. Movies (Mafia, jail breaks, cowboy, ninja, humor, etc.)
5. Academic trends (psychoanalysis, philosophy, space studies, etc.)
6. Global trends and movements such as
 - a. peace education
 - b. fundamentalism
 - c. wars
7. Technological innovations
8. Mass media

D. *Political Correctness in Language Use*

1. Ethnic minorities
2. Women

3. Handicapped
4. Socially and economically disadvantaged
3. Style sheets

E. *Names and Myths Around them*

1. Naming practices
2. Reference of names
3. Nicknames and teknonyms
4. Naming superstitions

F. *Child Language*

1. Collect words from one-word stage
2. Collect examples of two-word stage
3. Collect examples of syntactic development
 - a. Questions
 - b. Negation
 - c. Relative clause