Integrating Experimental Methods, Language Documentation, and (Linguistic) Theory

University of Alaska, Fairbanks
CoLang 2016

Instructors:

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Workshop description:

Language documentation and linguistic theories mutually benefit from cooperation - data from documentation propels linguistic theories, and different theories can inform the collection of language materials. A wide array of rich, naturally occurring data collected in language documentation settings has long informed and been used for the basis for typological assertions and to further linguistic inquiry (Palosaari and Campbell 2011, Himmelmann 2012). On the other hand, O'Grady et al. (2009) use psycholinguistic theory and methods to aid in the documentation and assessment of language fluency that can be used for revitalization efforts. Additionally, the integration of experimental methods in language documentation has assisted in scientifically defining certain articulatory and acoustic parameters which are otherwise impossible to attain using only traditional documentation methodology (Miller 2008, Miller et al. 2009, Miller and Finch 2011).

During this workshop, participants will learn about the incorporation of experimental methods focusing on elicitations and traditional approaches to language documentation into linguistic theory. The workshop will consist of a combination of theory, examples, and hands-on activity in an active learning format, with an emphasis on participant-led inquiry. Data will be drawn from various language families

Course materials:

All course readings and materials will be provided to students enrolled in the class in .pdf format. Course readings will be announced at a later date.

Supplies needed:

Note-taking supplies, laptop (recommended, but not required).

Course goals:

In integrating experimental methods with more traditional documentation methods and with theory, we will be answering several questions:

- What are some experimental approaches to collecting data that can complement traditional documentation methods?
- How can experiment-based elicitation contribute to linguistic theories?
- How does one prepare for an elicitation targeting specific structures or phenomena?

Student learning objectives:

During this workshop, students will learn about the incorporation of experimental methods focusing on elicitations and traditional approaches to language documentation into linguistic theory. By the end of the workshop, students will be able to:

- Identify the mutual benefits that theoretical analysis and language documentation can provide to each other.
- Understand ways in which experimental methods can help enhance the collection of linguistic data.
- Design elicitation materials that incorporate experimental and traditional documentation methodology to support linguistic theory.

Instructional methods:

The workshop will be taught in 4 parts. At the beginning of each session, the instructors will lead interactive short lectures on the assigned topic. The lectures will have theoretical components as well as discussions involving potential challenges for combining experiments in language documentation. With the exception of the first and last sessions, all lectures and activities will be organized based on major areas of linguistics. Examples for further probing of linguistic forms will be provided from at least two languages.

Evaluation:

Students will work in small groups throughout each of the sessions, developing elicitation materials that can be used for experiments. Students taking the course for academic credit will submit their elicitation materials along with a one-page reflection summarizing the main points of the workshop and illustrating how they integrated these into their elicitation materials.

Course evaluation will be on a Pass/Fail basis, with full attendance and submission of the materials above required to pass.

Disabilities services:

The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. The instructor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (208 WHIT, 474-5655) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.