

Linguistic Field Methods
CAS LX 391/GRS LX 691 (Fall 2022)
MWF 1:25-2:15am, CAS 424

Professor: Amy Hutchinson (she/her)
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Drop-in hours: Monday 12:00-1:00,
Tuesday 10:30-11:30,
or by appointment (email me!)

Course description

This course is designed to prepare you to undertake the thrilling process of describing, analyzing, and documenting a previously undescribed language. You will learn how to plan and conduct elicitations of linguistic data, how to organize that data in electronic and paper form, and how to pursue research based on published literature combined with fieldwork. You will do this by working as a class to investigate a single language throughout the semester, and you will also produce a team-based final research project.

The chosen language for this year's class is Mongolian. We will be working with Bulgamaa Batdelger, who is a native speaker of Mongolian, and a graduate student here at Boston University.

Course objectives

In this course we will explore the following objectives:

1. To work with a native speaker to elicit linguistic data of various sorts
2. To organize elicitation sessions around specific research questions, constructing hypotheses and devising various ways of testing them in elicitation
3. To function as part of a team working towards a common goal, supporting colleagues and promptly performing tasks delegated to them by the group
4. To use a range of useful hardware and software to document and analyze real linguistic data
5. To develop original research based on observations discovered during the fieldwork process

Prerequisites

CAS LX 250 Introduction to Linguistics or equivalent, or instructor approval

Course structure

Students in this course will be divided into three separate teams based on their personal and research interests. Each of these teams will have a distinct goal that they will work towards as a group. The three teams will be as follows:

1. D-Side: The d-side team will aim to compile a dictionary, sketch grammar, and annotated text to support the description of the language in question.
2. P-Side: The p-side team will focus on an in-depth study on the phonetics and phonology of the language with additional focus on a phonetic or phonological concept or process of their choosing
3. S-Side: The s-side will develop a detailed understanding of the syntactic structure of the language with additional focus on a syntactic phenomenon of their choosing

Each team will work towards their own descriptive and analytic goals, one on each day of class. The language consultant will also hold office hours in the likely event that additional data collection needs to occur outside of the classroom.

Additionally, this course will be divided into two phases: During the **first phase** (Weeks 1-3) we will learn the basics of carrying out linguistic fieldwork and will work towards developing an initial

understanding of how our language for the semester works. Our data sessions will focus on figuring out the basics of our language's phonology, building a lexicon, and understanding basic phrase structure. You will also meet with our speaker during their office hours to ask them questions about their language that will help develop your team's research goals. During this phase, we will not rely on any outside linguistic sources or background information on our language (including me!).

In the **second phase** (Weeks 4-15), we will remove the illusion that nothing is known about our language and begin to bring in outside resources. During this phase, students will give weekly presentations on topics related to existing research on our language and our research goals will shift as we incorporate our new-found knowledge about the language.

Instructional format

This course will consist of a mix of (1) in-class data collection and live elicitation with a native speaker consultant, (2) interactive lectures on methodologies and skills necessary for collecting and analyzing raw language data, (3) in-class discussions on data analysis, and (4) out-of-class data collection and elicitation opportunities. The course aims to create an active learning environment. This approach means that throughout the semester, you will be expected to engage actively during class, solve problems collaboratively, practice self-assessment, and participate in a team-based learning experience.

Consultant information

Bulgamaa will hold office hours each week in 621 Comm Ave., Room 114. Her office hours are on Wednesdays from 2:30-4:30pm and Fridays from 10:00am-1:00pm. Her email is bulgamaa@bu.edu.

Required text

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, I will post scanned excerpts from a range of sources to the Google drive. A number of these will come from the following excellent books on linguistic field techniques and will also base our ethical discussions on linguistic fieldwork as an enterprise. If you are interested in pursuing fieldwork in the future, you may want to get a personal copy of one or more of them, but this is not required for this course.

- Bower, Claire. 2015. *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide (2nd edition)*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vaux, Bert, J. Cooper, and E. Tucker. 2007. *Linguistic Field Methods*. Wipf and Stock Pub.
- Bochnak, Ryan, and Lisa Matthewson (eds.). 2015. [*Methodologies in Semantic Fieldwork*](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schilling, Natalie. 2013. *Sociolinguistic Fieldwork*. Cambridge University Press.

While you will not be "examined" on the readings in any direct way, we will discuss them to some extent in our lectures and discussions. More importantly, though, the team as a whole will be much more successful this semester if everyone in it is ready to apply the skills derived from the readings in class and on assignments when called upon.

As we learn more about the language, I will upload various existing pieces of literature on related languages, as and when other members of the team or I find them. I may choose to assign portions of such literature to the whole group as compulsory reading if it turns out to be useful, in which case I will update the syllabus. As you start to think about your final projects, I will recommend readings relevant for specific projects to individual (groups of) students.

Keep an eye on the syllabus to see what you should be reading each week. Any updates to the syllabus will be announced to the whole class by Slack.

Grading

Class participation	25%
Assignments	25%

Presentation	10%
Final project (paper and presentation)	40%

Course requirements

Class participation: As you can see, class participation counts for considerably more than it usually does in other classes. This weighting is because our success hinges on how well we work together as a team, and that means everyone turning up, pulling their weight, and participating as much as possible. During the semester, various jobs connected to our elicitation sessions will rotate around the group. All of us will be relying on each other to carry out our assigned jobs, so part of your participation grade will come from how dependable you are as a colleague when it comes to these rotating tasks. Another part will come from your level of participation in analytical discussions, and the quality and thoughtfulness of the questions and comments you contribute in the Slack channels.

Assignments: Over the course of the semester, you will complete 4 homework assignments. Details of each assignment will be provided on the class Google drive and should be submitted in class on the day that they are due. A brief sketch of each assignment is as follows:

- Assignment 1: Meet with our speaker during her office hours for a ten-minute recorded session. Use ELAN to transcribe on three tiers: Researcher (what you said), Bulgamaa (what Bulgamaa said), and Translation (a translation into English of anything Bulgamaa said in Mongolian). You must also write up the metadata of your session and a one-paragraph summary of what you learned.
- Assignment 2: Produce a sketch of one aspect of the phonology of the language (perhaps focused on phoneme inventory, segmental and suprasegmental processes, and syllable types—a full list to choose from will be posted later). This will be based only on the data we have collected in class. I’m not looking for you to get the “right” answers here (remember that I don’t know what those are either!), but for you to make the best use of the data we have access to. This assignment should be four pages maximum (12-point font, single-spaced).
- Assignment 3: Write up a final project topic proposal and hypothesis. This will be written as a team (d-side, p-side, and s-side). This assignment should be five pages maximum (12-point font, single-spaced) and should include:
 - A driving question that can be answered with data that you can get in class
 - A hypothesis (or hypotheses) for what you might find
 - Methods for going about answering this question
 - Any data that we’ve collected so far that is relevant to answering this question (there should be some data)
 - An address of the feasibility of your project
- Assignment 4 (Graduate students only!): Submit a literature review (10 pages, 12-point font, single-spaced) of your final project topic including:
 - At least three peer-reviewed sources that cover your topic and discuss it in a related language or geographically close language
 - An introduction and conclusion (literature review \neq annotated bibliography) including two or three themes that draw connections between what you’ve seen in the articles/books you’ve read (can be different languages or different analytical approaches to the topic)

Presentation: You will record one 15-minute presentation on existing research on our languages or languages in the same language family. The goal of this presentation is to help develop your knowledge of our language and others that are similar in order to prepare you for your final project.

Final project: Your final project will consist of two main components: A final paper (30% of the final project category percentage) and a final presentation (10% of the final project category percentage). Regarding the final paper, you will produce a 20-page paper (maximum; 12-point font, single-spaced) with your team based on the research that you did over the course of the semester. Each team member will also write up a one-page summary of their contribution to the paper. Each group will also present a 50-minute summary of their final project in class during week 15.

Class procedures

During elicitation sessions, there are several jobs that need to be done. These jobs will rotate amongst all of us throughout the semester, following a job rota that we will agree upon. Once we establish the rota, it is your responsibility to do your job on your assigned days. If you are ill or discover you can't attend class when you have a job, **it is your responsibility to find someone else to cover your shift by emailing a colleague ahead of time and covering their shift in return.** Don't let your fellow teammates down!

Academic integrity

All undergraduate students are responsible for understanding and complying with the BU Academic Conduct Code, available at: <https://www.bu.edu/cas/current-students/undergraduate/academic-conductcode-2/>

Graduate students should consult the GRS Academic and Professional Conduct Code: <https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/2017/02/GRS-Academic-Conduct-Code-Final.pdf>

Collaboration

If you decide to form a study group to work together on assignments, your collaboration should not go beyond discussing ideas together. In other words, you must write up your own assignment separately from the group, using only your own words (except when quoting other work directly, in which case use citations as standard). The only exception to this is if you have been pre-approved to work as a group.

The following are all banned forms of collaboration (except for pre-approved group final projects):

- Having one or more members of the group produce a “group draft”, or “group essay plan”, which individual members of the group then customize.
- Writing up on separate computers while conferring with each other in real time (whether in person or via Zoom, chat services, or any other medium).
- Using another student's complete assignment as a reference when completing your own.

Grading standards

95-100	A	78-79.99	C+
90-94.99	A-	73-77.99	C
88-89.99	B+	70-72.99	C-
83-87.99	B	60-69.99	D
80-82.99	B-	<60	F

Resources and support

Please feel free to visit me during my drop-in hours; I would be delighted to chat with you informally about course content and any questions or comments you may have. If you cannot make my regularly scheduled drop-in hours, please feel free to contact me to make an appointment.

If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, please do communicate that to me. Also consider contacting your academic advisor (or CAS's Office of Academic Advising: 100 Bay State Rd., Room 401, casadv@bu.edu, 617-353-2400) and/or make use of the peer tutoring resources at the Educational Resource Center (<http://www.bu.edu/erc/peer-tutoring/>).

If you require course material in an alternative format or need special accommodations due to a disability, please contact me and the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible (<http://www.bu.edu/disability/>).

Disclaimer

This syllabus and course schedule are subject to change. All changes will automatically be updated on Google Drive and will be communicated via Slack and/or in class.

Course schedule

	Date	Topic(s)	Elicitation Session Job Rota	Assignments (due <i>in class</i> unless otherwise noted)
Week 1	Sept 7	Introduction to the course	N/A	Learn what you can about our language, its history, its speakers, and its neighbors (but stay away from anything linguistic until week 4!!)
	Sept 9	Introduction to consultant Completing your first elicitation session	Leader: Prof. Hutchinson Data manager: April Transcriber: Hayat	Read Sarvasy & Forker (<i>Introduction</i>) and Dixon 2007 (<i>Field Linguistics: a minor manual</i>)
Week 2	Sept 12	D-Side: Introduction -Elicitation: Bower list	Leader: Prof. Hutchinson Data manager: Rahaf (sub Jonika) Transcriber #1: Ahmad Transcriber #2: Anoushka	
	Sept 14	P-Side: Introduction -Elicitation: Bower list (with focus on minimal pairs)	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Sept 16	S-Side: Introduction -Elicitation: Bower list (with focus on simple noun phrases)	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
Week 3	Sept 19	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Bower Chapters 1, 4, and 11
	Sept 21	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Sept 23	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	

Week 4	Sept 26	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Bower Chapter 3
	Sept 28	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Sept 30	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Submit Assignment 1 (ELAN)
Week 5	Oct 3	D-Side (30 mins) P-Side (15 mins)	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2: Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Bower Chapter 5
	Oct 5	P-Side (15 mins) S-Side (30 mins)	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2: Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Oct 5	No class (Wellness day)		Presentation #1
Week 6	Oct 11 (BU Monday)	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Bower Chapter 6 Presentation #2

	Oct 12	P-Side	Leader: Rebecca Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Presentation #3
	Oct 14	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Submit Assignment 2 (Phonology Sketch)
Week 7	Oct 17	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Boweren Chapter 7
	Oct 19	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Rebecca Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Presentation #4
	Oct 21	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Presentation #5
Week 8	Oct 24	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Boweren Chapter 13
	Oct 26	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Oct 28	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
Week 9	Oct 31	D-Side	Leader: Data manager:	Read Boweren Chapter 9

			Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Nov 2	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Nov 4	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Submit Assignment 3 (Project Proposal)
Week 10	Nov 7	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Hale (2001)
	Nov 9	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Nov 11	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
Week 11	Nov 14	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Read Bown Chapter 14
	Nov 16	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Nov 18	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	Submit Assignment 4 (Lit Review)

Week 12	Nov 21	No class (Wellness day)		
	Nov 23	No class (Fall recess)		
	Nov 25			
Week 13	Nov 28	D-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Nov 30	P-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
	Dec 2	S-Side	Leader: Data manager: Transcriber #1: Transcriber #2:	
Week 14	Dec 5	Final presentations		
	Dec 7	Final presentations		
	Dec 9	Final presentations		
Week 15	Dec 12	No class		
Finals week		Final projects due December 16th, 2022 by 11:59pm		