

Teaching Linguistics

Guided Research in LEL

Semester 1, 2025–26

(updated October 17, 2025)

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- Office hours: TBD or email me or just stop by
- Seminar: Thursdays, 2:10-3pm, [7–8 Chambers Street room 1.01](#) (mind the step at the top of the stairs)

1 Course description

“When we consider the practically universal use in all educational institutions of a system of marks, whether numbers or letters, to indicate scholastic attainment of the pupils or students in these institutions, and when we remember how very great stress is laid by teachers and pupils alike upon these marks as real measures or indicators of attainment, we can but be astonished at the blind faith that has been felt in the reliability of the marking systems.”

(Finkelstein 1913, cited in Schinske & Tanner 2014)

In this seminar we’ll take a critical look at teaching in higher education, with a focus on linguistics. Reading original research papers — from empirical studies to theoretical works — we’ll discuss topics such as curriculum design, assessment, and in-class techniques. Discussion will also follow the interests of seminar participants. Assessment combines reviews of the literature with opportunities to develop our own materials. Note that this seminar does not provide hands-on training for would-be teachers, although the issues discussed will be of interest if you have more applied interests.

2 Learning outcomes

As I see it, every course at university is meant to help us:

- (1) a. Learn from each other,
- b. Make friends,
- c. Make mistakes.

In terms of content, the goals of this seminar are to:

- (2) a. Become familiar with general issues in pedagogy,
- b. Evaluate different approaches to assessment,
- c. Critically discuss methods of teaching and assessment in linguistics.

3 Assessment

In order to evaluate how well we reached the goals in (2), we'll need to come up with a way of *assessing* our progress. I propose to do that through assessed *projects* and informal *reflections*. We'll discuss the very nature of assessment as part of the seminar, but there are also some bureaucratic constraints imposed on us for some reason, which we'll have to obey.

3.1 Projects

The project is a general term for a substantial submitted contribution. We'll decide on the exact scope of these together; as a starting point, I imagine small group projects that create any of the following, accompanied by a discussion of what the project was meant to achieve.

- A lesson plan (lecture/tutorial/seminar).
- A piece of assessment (coursework).
- A syllabus for a course.
- A curriculum for a degree programme.

To make this more tangible, and to give us all a common starting point, I suggest that projects will be based in one way or another on the Scots-English poem *I'm no havin' children* by Len Pennie: <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/im-no-havin-children/>¹

The poem can function as a base for discussion of various aspects of linguistics, including sociolinguistics, acquisition, code switching, pragmatics, stylistics, syntax, phonology, morphology, language change and lexical processing.

3.2 Reflections

We'll all post reflections to Learn after each seminar. Student reflections will only be visible to the instructor; Itamar's reflections will be visible to the entire class.

A final formative self-evaluation will accompany the final draft of the project. We'll agree on the questions together.

3.3 Stuff outwith our control

The following constraints are imposed on us and we cannot change them, so we'll have to live with them. (See if you can find the university or School regulations that require any of this!)

1. A first draft is due Monday 3 November (Week 8).
 - 1,500 words or equivalent.
 - Worth 30% of the final mark (MA 20 credits, MSc 10 credits) / 20% (MSc 20 credits).

¹The poet also performs the poem in this video, with an intro and outro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGQTG0vXSyg>

2. The final draft is due Monday 8 December (Week “13”).

- 2,500 words or equivalent (MA 20 credits, MSc 10 credits) / 4,000 words or equivalent (MSc 20 credits).
- Worth 70% of the final mark (MA 20 credits, MSc 10 credits) / 80% (MSc 20 credits).

Given the above, we’ll need to put numbers on the contributions (“marks”). I suggest we agree on an easy way to do this once the semester starts, probably through some version of standards-based grading (Nilson 2014).

4 Schedule (draft)

Readings are given in order of priority; in most cases the first is more general and the second is specific to linguistics. Any additional readings are given in a separate row, under the dashed line.

This is just a starting point: we will change the schedule as much as we want, according to class interest.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading 1	Reading 2
2	25/09	Introduction		
3	2/10	Grading	Warner (2018: Ch. 2.2) ² Harlow, Harlow & Meyer (1950)	Butler & Nisan (1986) Clark & Talbert (2023: Ch. 2)
4	9/10	Assessment	Kempler, Mitchell & Vosburg (2025) Lewis (2022)	Zuraw et al. (2019)
5	16/10	Assessment (continued), group projects		
6	23/10	Creative projects	Sanders (2016) Neuhaus (2022)	Goodman (2022) Napoli, Gasser & Huang (2022)
7	30/10	Equality	Theobald et al. (2020) Williams (2021)	Cépeda et al. (2021) Sanders, Konnelly & Umbal (2024)
8	3/11	📧 First draft due 📧		
	6/11	“Misconduct”	Anderman & Koenka (2017)	Konnelly & Sanders (2024)
9	13/11	Creative projects	Goodman (2022) Neuhaus (2022)	Napoli, Gasser & Huang (2022) Sanders (2016)
10	20/11	The neoliberal university	Wånggren (2018)	Wånggren & Kastner (In prep)
11	27/11	📧 Presentations 📧		
13	8/12	📧 Final draft due 📧		

²P. 43, “The Problem of Surveillance”

5 Additional readings by topic

The literature is vast, like with any other subject. For papers specifically about linguistics, check out the dedicated sections of the journals *Language*, *American Speech*, and *Language and Linguistics Compass*. Papers from the 1979–1991 run of the journal *Innovations in Linguistics Education* can also be found [online](#).

Some suggestions are given below; linguistics-specific papers are prefaced with “Linguistics”.

5.1 The point of teaching

- How people learn: [Ambrose et al. \(2010\)](#), [National Research Council \(2000\)](#).
- Learning for mastery: early classic by [Bloom \(1968\)](#), recent book-length discussion focused on writing by [Warner \(2018\)](#), and a smaller paper for comparison on Biology ([Ebery-May, Batzli & Lim 2003](#)).
- Critical pedagogy: first two chapters of [Freire \(1968/1970\)](#), teaching to transform society in [hooks \(1994\)](#), and the most accessible version in [Gannon \(2020\)](#).
- Emergent learning outcomes: [Hussey & Smith \(2002, 2003, 2010\)](#), [Korosteleva & Polglase \(2011\)](#).
- Bloom’s Taxonomy: [Anderson & Krathwohl \(2001\)](#) and Depth of Knowledge: [Francis \(2021\)](#).
- ABC curriculum design: [Young & Perović \(2016\)](#).
- What is a curriculum: [Barnett & Coate \(2005\)](#).
- Gatekeeping and curriculum: “I can’t do maths” ([Coles & Sinclair 2022](#)).

5.2 Assessment

5.2.1 Marks

- Chapter 2 of [Clark & Talbert \(2023\)](#).
- Excellent overview by [Schinske & Tanner \(2014\)](#).
- Marks hurt learning: [Butler & Nisan \(1986\)](#), [Butler \(1987\)](#), [Lipnevich & Smith \(2008\)](#).
- Anything by Alfie Kohn, like his book ([Kohn 1993/2018](#)) or essays (e.g. <https://www.alfiekohn.org/article/rewards-25-years-later/>).
- Grades aren’t normal: [Arthurs et al. \(2019\)](#).
- Stommel’s “[Why I don’t grade](#)” and book ([Stommel 2023](#)).
- Eyler’s book: [Eyler \(2024\)](#).

5.2.2 “Alternative” assessment

- Book on specifications- and standards-based grading: [Nilson \(2014\)](#).
- Book with various examples of ungrading and alternative assessment: [Blum \(2020\)](#).
- Ungrading case studies: [Gorichanaz \(2022\)](#), [Kempler, Mitchell & Vosburg \(2025\)](#).
- Skills-based grading reduces anxiety: [Lewis \(2022\)](#).
- Review of reduced grading: [Normann, Sandvik & Fjørtoft \(2023\)](#).
- 2023 UoE Ungrading event: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/UngradingA+What+it+is+and+why+should+we+do+itF/1_zydssy92

- Podcast: The Happiness Lab, Making the grade <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeBHvSPL6bk>
- Self-assessment and feedback: Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006).
- Unessays: Goodman (2022), Neuhaus (2022).
- Linguistics SBG in phonology and phonetics: Zuraw et al. (2019).
- Linguistics SBG in linguistics: O’Leary & Stockwell (2022).
- Linguistics SBG in LEL2A syntax: Wilson & Kastner (2025).
- Linguistics Choose your own adventure: Geissler & Rood (2024).

5.3 Active learning

5.3.1 Active learning works

- Very large physics study: Hake (1998).
- More subjects: Freeman et al. (2014).
- Deslauriers et al. (2019) and Stanger-Hall (2012) on student response.
- Active learning doesn’t work if instructors aren’t intentional about it: Andrews et al. (2011).
- Linguistics Using clickers: Marlow (2010).
- Linguistics Jen Hay’s phonetics toolbox: Hay (2011), plus other chapters in that book.
- Linguistics Labs: Harrigan, Hogoboom & Cochrane (2022).
- Linguistics Puzzles in LEL1A and LEL2D: Iosad, Trousdale & Truswell (2022).

5.3.2 Collaboration

- Collaboration works: Humphreys, Johnson & Johnson (1982).
- The Jigsaw puzzle: Aronson & Patnoe (1997), Darnon, Buchs & Desbar (2012), Hedeon (2003).
- Peer instruction: Tullis & Goldstone (2020).

5.4 Motivation

- Tapping into intrinsic motivation: Lepper & Cordova (1992).
- Grades don’t incentivise Grant & Green (2012).
- Monkeys like puzzles, not rewards: Harlow, Harlow & Meyer (1950).
- Broader theory: Eccles (2005).

5.5 Academic “misconduct”

- Paper summarising what is actually going on: Anderman & Koenka (2017).
- Book-length analysis: Lang (2013).
- Developmental rather than punitive approach: Bertram Gallant & Stephens (2020).
- Recent book on AI: Bertram Gallant & Rettinger (2025).
- Linguistics AI: Konnelly & Sanders (2024).

5.6 The neoliberal university

- Teaching in a corporate university (don't miss the part comparing Dickens with UK higher ed): [Wånggren \(2018\)](#).
- Compassion instead of neoliberalism: [Waddington \(2021\)](#).
- Longer reports and collections: [Gair, Hager & Herzog \(2021\)](#), [McCann \(2024\)](#).
- Precarious staff: [Bonello & Wøanggren \(2023\)](#).
- General reaction and references: [Springer \(2024\)](#).

5.7 Diversity, Equality, Equity, Inclusion

5.7.1 EDI

- Important book on equality in assessment: [Feldman \(2018\)](#).
- Active learning and alternative assessment close attainment gaps: [Theobald et al. \(2020\)](#), [Williams \(2021\)](#), [Yik et al. \(2025\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Example sentences: [Cépeda et al. \(2021\)](#), [Kotek et al. \(2021\)](#).
- **Linguistics** General roadmap: [Sanders, Konnelly & Umbal \(2024\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Active learning for equality: [Schwarz \(2024\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Small Teaching ([Lang 2016](#)) for equality in linguistics: [Bjorndahl et al. \(2024\)](#).

5.7.2 Neurodiversity

- For a general overview of neurodiversity with some connections to education, see *What defines our view of executive functioning?* in [Middleton \(2024: 19\)](#).
- Some big-picture papers: [Dwyer et al. \(2022\)](#), [Hamilton & Petty \(2023\)](#), [Silverman \(2025\)](#).
- Empirical study: [Ernestes \(2025\)](#).

5.8 Other

- Submission deadlines: [Conner \(2024\)](#).
- Maths students say they don't like things: [Iannone & Simpson \(2013, 2014\)](#).
- Stories: [Gelman & Basbøll \(2014\)](#).
- Intellectual humility: [Porter et al. \(2020\)](#).
- Pedagogical linguistics (applied linguistics in language classes) is a field in its own right; see [Hudson & Walmsley \(2005\)](#) or [Hudson \(2020\)](#) for a start.
- Student evaluation of instructors: [Yunker & Yunker \(2003\)](#), [Gelber et al. \(2022\)](#), [Heffernan \(2022\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Teaching linguistics with conlangs: [Sanders \(2016\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Teaching linguistics with games: [Kogan \(2025\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Dissertations: [Napoli, Gasser & Huang \(2022\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Historical linguistics in schools: [Goddard et al. \(2025\)](#).
- **Linguistics** Teaching the history of linguistics: [Joseph \(2024\)](#), [Newell \(2024\)](#).

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