

LIN 312: Sign Language Linguistics

Syllabus

Princeton University, Spring 2020

Up-to-date as of May 12, 2020

Time and place

Mondays & Wednesdays, at 11am–12:20pm
Green Hall, 0-S-9

Starting from March 23: <https://princeton.zoom.us/j/523364868>

Instructors

Masha Esipova [ˈmɑʃə ˈjesɪpəvə]

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Office hours: Fridays at 10am–12pm, <https://princeton.zoom.us/j/690252037>

Course description

This course is an introduction to sign language linguistics. It gives an overview of how sign language is similar to spoken language and how it is different, providing insights into how sign language studies inform our understanding of human language ability. The students also get introduced to linguistically relevant aspects of Deaf culture and history. Topics covered may include: sign language phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics; sign and gesture; sociolinguistic variation in sign language; neural representation of sign language; psycholinguistic aspects of sign language; acquisition and emergence of sign languages; bilingualism in sign language; sign language literature; sign language and Deaf education; sign language and Deaf rights. The course relies on data from a variety of sign languages.

Prerequisites

LIN 201 or permission of the instructors.

Readings

The readings for the course will include book chapters and papers and will be posted on the course website.

Grade composition and calculation

10% Participation. Participation grade will be based on classroom participation (e.g., asking and answering questions, contributing thoughts) and discussion outside of the classroom (e.g., during office hours or on the online discussion board).

40% Homework. There will be 4 homework assignments throughout the course. The homeworks should be submitted before class on the day that they are due. Late submissions will not be accepted unless an extension has been granted in advance. **Mid-semester update:** the lowest homework grade will be dropped when calculating the total.

20% Take-home midterm exam.

30% Take-home final exam.

Your letter grade for the class will be assigned on the following scale:

A+	>100%	B+	87–89%	C+	77–79%	D	60–69%
A	93–100%	B	83–86%	C	73–76%	F	<60%
A-	90–92%	B-	80–82%	C-	70–72%		

Fractional grades will be rounded to the nearest integer, with the round-half-up rule in place (e.g., 92.4 will be rounded to 92 and 92.5 will be rounded to 93).

Policies and other remarks

Extra credit. There may or may not be opportunities for extra credit. If extra credit is issued, it will be intended as an equal opportunity for everyone in the class to improve their grades, so it will not be issued to individual students upon request.

How to contact us. For short questions, send us an email or talk to us right before or right after class. We will try our best to respond to your email within 24 hours; responses to emails on weekends should not be taken for granted. For more involved questions or discussions, please come to our office hours or make an appointment.

Homework collaboration policy. Collaboration on homework assignments is allowed and encouraged. However, each student is expected to turn in their own write-up and list the names of people they collaborated with.

Academic integrity. Academic integrity is taken very seriously, and any misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, or letting someone else cheat) will be reported. Students should review the University publication on academic integrity, which can be found at https://odoc.princeton.edu/sites/odoc/files/950045_AcademicIntegrity2018-19_FINAL_PDF.pdf. Should the University discipline committee determine that your work violates any portion of this policy, it will receive a grade of zero and may be reported to the deans. If you are unclear about whether something counts as honest/dishonest work, please ask us.

Copyright notice. All course materials are under copyright of their respective authors. That means that none of the materials posted on the course website can be redistributed without permission from the author(s). If you are unclear about the details behind the copyright policies, please ask us.

Schedule

The following is a preliminary schedule of the course. Changes to it will be announced in class.

Date	Instr.	Topics	Readings	Notes
2/3	ME+NB	What is sign language (SL)? Debunking myths about SL	Newport & Supalla	
2/5	ME	SL phonetics and phonology	Pfau et al., 2, 3	
2/10	ME	SL prosody	Pfau et al., 4	
2/12	ME	SL inflectional morphology	Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 3	
2/17	ME	SL derivational morphology; classifiers	Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 4, 5	
2/19	ME	SL syntax: word order	Pfau et al., 12	HW1 out
2/24	ME	SL syntax: coordination & subordination; sentence types	Pfau et al., 16, 14	
2/26	ME	SL semantics: pronouns	Schlenker 2017	HW1 due; midterm out
3/2	ME	SL semantics: role shift; iconic mereology	Schlenker 2018 (parts)	
3/4	ME	SL semantics: iconic mereology; focus	Schlenker et al. 2016	
3/9	NB	SL sociolinguistics	Pfau et al., 33	
3/11	NB	SL sociolinguistics	Willoughby et al.; Hill	Midterm due; HW2 out

3/16		No class, spring break		
3/18		No class, spring break		
3/23	ME	Sign and gesture: cognitive perspective	Goldin-Meadow & Brentari	
3/25	ME	Sign and gesture: formal perspective	Esipova	HW2 due
3/30	NB	SL acquisition	Pfau et al., 28	
4/1	NB	SL acquisition	Napoli et al.; Geers et al.; Smith & Wolfe	
4/6	ME	SL emergence	Meir et al.	
4/8	ME	Psycholinguistic aspects of SL	Pfau et al., 29, 30	HW3 out
4/13	ME	SL in the brain	Pfau et al., 31	
4/15	ME+Nb	Bilingualism in SL	de Quadros et al.; Pfau et al., 35	HW3 due
4/20	NB	SL literature	Bauman et al., preface, 1, 2, 5, appendix A	HW4 out
4/22	NB	SL literature		
4/27	NB	SL and Deaf education	Humphries et al.; World Federation of the Deaf	HW4 due; final out
4/29	NB	SL and Deaf rights		
5/12		Dean's Date		Final due

Bibliography

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