

Introduction to the study of language
JRS, Fall 2011
Syllabus

Time/Room: 3x3 on Fridays (30.9., 7.10, 11.11), Room 128

Instructor: Mgr. Štefan Beňuš, PhD.

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Office hours: by appointment, Room 235

Overview

After discussing foundational questions about the nature of language and its relation to the mind and the world, the course will provide a more detailed discussion of selected core areas of linguistics. The emphasis will be on analyzing real data and providing a formal description of the data, as well as understanding the historical development of linguistics as a scientific discipline.

Texts (any edition is fine; the more recent the better)

Pinker, Steven. *The Language Instinct*, HarperPerennial.

Fromkin, Victoria, Rodman, Robert, and Hyams, Nina. *An Introduction to Language*. Heinle.

William O'Grady, John Archibald, Mark Aronoff, Janie Rees-Miller. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Requirements

100% Final exam

Homework

There will be no mandatory homework assignments. However, we will go over several practical exercises in class, students are encouraged to try/finish some of them on their own.

Attendance & participation

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. You are expected to be actively involved in class discussions, which presupposes you did reading in advance. Do not hesitate to ask questions!

Tentative outline

Session	Topic	Readings
1	Why are we interested in language? Is human language special? (displacement, arbitrariness, discreteness, productivity) Prescriptive vs. Descriptive approach Innateness hypothesis	Pinker Ch 1&2 Fromkin, Ch1
2	Words & Sounds, Language change	
3	Sentences and larger units	