



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENG911: Advanced Linguistic Theories and Present-Day English

Course Lecturer: Professor Iyabode O. A. Nwabueze, *MNAL*

Detailed Course Description¹

ENG911 Advanced Linguistic Theory and Present Day English Core (3 Credit units)

This course intends to bring into focus the theories of language that exist in linguistic studies. It will generally introduce students to a greater depth of theoretical delineation in linguistics, with special focus on broad areas of current research activities in the different levels of linguistic inquiry. It will essentially give guidance to students on the current issues in linguistic research. It will also help guide them on how to conduct research in language studies, engaging different theoretical strategies that are currently available or that could be available through conceptual delineation. Such theories like Chomsky's broad generative theory, Halliday's Systemic theory, van Dijk's CDA focus, etc. will be considered. Moreover, such research interest areas like qualitative, variability studies, quantitative sociolinguistic focus, etc., will receive consideration.

Introductory Note

Welcome to ENG 911: Advanced Linguistic Theories and Present-Day English. The purpose of this course is to strengthen your knowledge of various linguistic theories such as Transformational Generative Grammar, Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as intimate you with the current issues, methods and principles arising from the theories. It is expected that, as advanced students, you will properly critique the theories in order to establish their areas of strength and weakness. The course will also guide you towards propounding your own theories and, in cases of conceptual delineation, especially, where the existing theories do not serve you effectively in your doctoral thesis and any other research as you deem fit. Furthermore, we will consider

concerns about modern English language, its features and variations, bearing in mind how these can influence new theoretical developments.

Course Objectives

It is expected that, at the end of the course, you should be equipped with:

- a. practical skills for identifying what theories to use in your research exercise as well as current issues in the theories identified
- b. Relevant knowledge to develop interdisciplinary perspectives, which will enable you to incorporate more than one linguistic theory in academic research, depending on your research objectives
- c. the knowledge of the causes of continual linguistic theorization, update and even total diversification
- d. techniques for propounding new theories for your linguistic analyses as a result of the shortcomings of the existing ones, and
- e. the professional confidence and critical skills for communicative language usage and teaching.

Course Outline/Class Schedule²

Week	Topic
Week 1	<p>a. The central concerns of linguistic theories</p> <p>b. Phonological theories (e.g. generative phonology, systemic phonology, metrical phonology, auto-segmental phonology, theories of rhythm, theories of syllable, theories of intonation—ToBI: Tones & Break Indices, ToDI: Transcription of Dutch Intonation), optimality theory, etc.), and their application in research</p>

Week 2	Lexical/semantic theories (e.g. lexical fields, componential analysis, relational semantics, natural semantic, meta-language, conceptual metaphor theory, etc.). Applying them in your research
Week 3	Syntactical theories (e.g. structural grammar, transformational generative grammar, systemic functional grammar, tagmemics, case grammar, etc.). Their application in linguistic research
Week 4	1st Seminar
Week 5	a. Pragmatic theories (e.g. speech act theories, pragmatic act theory, conversational implicature, relevance theory, theories of politeness, etc.), and their application in research .b. Discourse (e.g. interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, variation analysis, conversation analysis), and how to apply them in a research
Week 6	.a. Critical linguistic theories (e.g. linguistic criticism, discourse-historical approach, cognitive-discourse approach, social-discourse approach, etc). Applying them in a linguistic research .b. Textual strategies, structural patterning, and meaning expression in the present-day English language use
Week 7	2nd Seminar
Week 8	Recap and give your own Theories

The Central Concern of Linguistic Theories

Generally, both scientific and linguistic theories serve the same purpose, which is to identify, formulate and explain underlying rules and principles of how things work in the world or

language, respectively. This is done by means of observation and generalization. The central concern of linguistic theories, and English language theories in particular, is illustrated by Hans-Jörg Schmid (2012: 1) as follows:

Just as the theory of gravitation allows us to predict that objects which are dropped will fall to the ground rather than begin to float, a good theory of the English language will allow us to predict which sentences and words speakers are likely to produce and understand and which they will not. This means that theories do not merely have enormous explanatory potential, but also massive practical implications.

The concerns of linguistic theories can be summarized as follows, depending on the area of linguistics involved:

- i. Linguistic theories in the fields of grammar (including phonology, morphology, syntax) and lexicology are formulated to understand the nature and structure of language(s).
- ii. Theories in linguistic semantics aim at scientific accounts of the rather elusive phenomenon of how linguistic elements and structures can convey meanings.
- iii. Cognitive-linguistic theories try to model what speakers know about language and how the structure of languages relates to other cognitive abilities like perception and attention allocation.
- iv. Psycholinguistic theories try to model what goes on in the minds of language users during ongoing processing and how languages are acquired by children.
- v. Theories in linguistic pragmatics model how communication works and how understanding comes about.
- vi. Theories in variational linguistics and sociolinguistics explain patterns of variation (accents, dialects, registers, etc.) and investigate parameters influencing these patterns (age, sex, social background, etc.).
- vii. Theories in historical linguistics try to model why and in which ways languages change and are related to each other historically.

Recommended Texts⁴

- Andrew, C. (2006). *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing
- Chomsky, N., & Halle, M. (1968). *The Sound Pattern of English*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Daniel, I. O. (2011). *Introductory Phonetics and Phonology of English*. NewCastle on Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
- Geeraerts, D. (2010). *Theories of lexical semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold
- Lamidi, M. T. (2008). *Aspects of Chomskyan Grammar*. Ibadan: University Press Plc.
- Levinson, S. C. (2005). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press
- Mey, J. L. (2006). *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing
- Nwabueze, I. O. A. & Aboh, R. (2023). *Linguistic Structure, Language Contact & Virtual Communication*. NOUN Press. Get your copy from here <https://selar.co/ke6244> or <https://flutterwave.com/store/akewoautheltd/of681ik2dnt7rc>
- Schmid, Hans-Jorg (2012). *Linguistic Theories, Approaches, and Methods*. (Draft Version) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316702142_Linguistic_Theories_Approaches_and_Methods .
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Applied Linguistics*. Routledge
- Saeed, J. I. (2007). *Semantics*. Blackwell Publishing
- Van Dijk, T. (2008). *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave
- Wodak, R. (2001a). What CDA is about – A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 1-13). SAGE Publications.
- ___ (2001b). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 63-94). SAGE Publications.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press

Some Relevant Journals³

Linguistic Inquiry, Applied Linguistics, Modern Language Journal, Journal of Pragmatics, Journal of Linguistics, Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory (CLLT), Natural Language and Linguistic Theory

NOTE

1. This course is strictly a seminar presentation course, using the course description as your guide.
2. The course schedule was prepared for when the course was to be taught. I decided to leave it here even though the course is now to be presented as seminar from the course description because I think it will somehow help in your research for your seminar.
3. The reference list may have some dated elements. However, this does not preclude you from using the materials listed as mere stepping stone to getting more current ones. The list will be updated as times go on.
4. The journals listed here are not exhaustive. You may get access to more from the electronic platforms/repositories such as Elsevier, EBHOST, etc. that the University subscribes to.

Best of luck!

Prof Iyabode O. A. Nwabueze, MNAL
Course developer/lecturer