THE SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTORY COURSE:
BRIDGING THE GAP FOR THE NONMAJOR

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The introductory linguistics course is the primary antidote that academic linguists can offer to commonly held, yet basically wrong-headed, views about language. It is essential, therefore, that this course be meaningful to the nonmajor student. Through a series of five vignettes, each by a different author and representing a variety of institutional types, we explore options other than 'baby' theoretical linguistics to the introductory linguistics course. A fundamental conclusion to these vignettes is that success in reaching the nonmajor turns on taking account of the institutional context and the student population and tailoring courses to be sensitive to these variables. This conclusion is driven home with an administrative view as to why every academic linguist and linguistics program should find the search for a successful introductory course compelling.*

Most linguists would agree that naïve understanding of language is as removed from fundamental linguistics principles as alchemy is from chemistry. Most linguists would also agree that such ignorance and myth can exact a high price, yielding flawed policies determining the education of our children and poorly constructed laws governing our social interaction. Changing the situation is a multifaceted enterprise, depending on the commitment of all members of the linguistic community. It involves advocacy in governmental domains, writing in the popular press, and educational innovation at all levels. We are concerned here with one aspect of this commitment, albeit perhaps the most obvious and accessible to academic linguists—the character of the introductory linguistics course, the first, last, and only linguistics course that most undergraduates will take.

The introductory linguistics course is the primary antidote that academic linguists can offer to commonly held, yet basically wrong-headed, views about language. Few individuals who do not attend college will encounter linguistics, and most college-going people will be exposed to linguistics once at best—when they take introductory linguistics. Thus, while the introductory course is the net to filter future majors in the field, it is also the only opportunity within our educational system to spread basic knowledge about language. It is essential, therefore, that this course be meaningful to the nonmajor student. When the nonmajor becomes your legislator or your child's teacher or the neighbor of a member of your board of education, his or her basic knowledge about language becomes a matter of considerable import.

One long-term consequence of doing an effective job in teaching the basic introductory course, then, is a population better educated about language and, thus, more receptive to scientifically based approaches to language and their implications for education,

public policy, and scientific discourse. Another, perhaps more self-serving, consequence could be an expansion of the proportion of students within the undergraduate population who take a linguistics course—and a movement of linguistics away from the curricular periphery on most college and university campuses. In either case, the result will advance the discipline and not only by broadening the employment base for linguists.

Historically, introductory linguistics has been taught as 'baby' theoretical linguistics, a practice that is reflected in the style and approach of most, if not all, supporting texts. The introductory linguistics course may not be peculiar among disciplinary introductions in being taught as a simplified version of theoretical subject matter. Suggestive in this regard is the existence of discussions on many college campuses as to whether disciplinary introductions are appropriate for the nonmajor student, or whether separate courses should be developed for nonmajors. But, as a discipline, linguistics is particularly vulnerable to the consequences of conflating a disciplinary introduction with a course for nonmajors because it is a discipline that is relatively unknown, at best, and is often misunderstood or feared by potential students.

Through a series of five vignettes, each by a different author and representing a variety of institutional types, the body of this article (§§2–6) offers another take on the introductory linguistics course. Brian Joseph, Ohio State University, profiles a program from a large research institution, where a sociolinguistics focus has been central to the development of a successful program. Michael Flynn, Carleton College, offers a perspective from a small, elite liberal arts institution, where a student's introduction to linguistics is through the professional literature. Rae Moses, Northwestern University, outlines a series of courses that connect linguistics to real world issues. Charlotte Webb, San Diego State University, provides a view from a teaching institution where the linguistics department is deeply involved in introductory courses for K–6 teachers. Cari Spring writes from the perspective of experiences shared with many young members of the discipline—the itinerant linguist, hired to teach introductory linguistics in one institution for a year or two and then for a year or two in another, forced to create course guidelines and respond to changing expectations on the fly.

If success is defined very pragmatically, that is, by a proven ability to attract students to the introductory course and, simultaneously, to maintain the commitment and enthusiasm of the departmental faculty—each of these introductory courses is successful. However, as the institutions vary—small, large; research, liberal arts—so do course content and goals. A fundamental conclusion, then, is that success turns on taking account of the institutional context and the student population and tailoring courses to be sensitive to these variables. This conclusion is driven home in §1. Providing an administrative view as to why every academic linguist and linguistics program should find the search for a successful introductory course compelling, Susan Steele, University of Connecticut, argues the necessity of paying attention to the institutional context.

The definition of a successful introductory linguistics course offered here assumes considerable plasticity in content, offering a contrast with the 'baby' theoretical linguistics approach. Embedded in this contrast is the question of whether there is a fundamental body of knowledge that all linguists would agree should be part of 'the' introductory course. This article doesn't answer that question, but it forces the issue.

1. To LIVE AND DIE BY THE BOTTOM LINE; SUSAN STEELE. While university and college administrators may be delighted with the quality of their linguistics programs, few such programs receive similar kudos when these administrators compare the undergraduate demand for linguistics courses to the demand for courses in many other disciplines, even
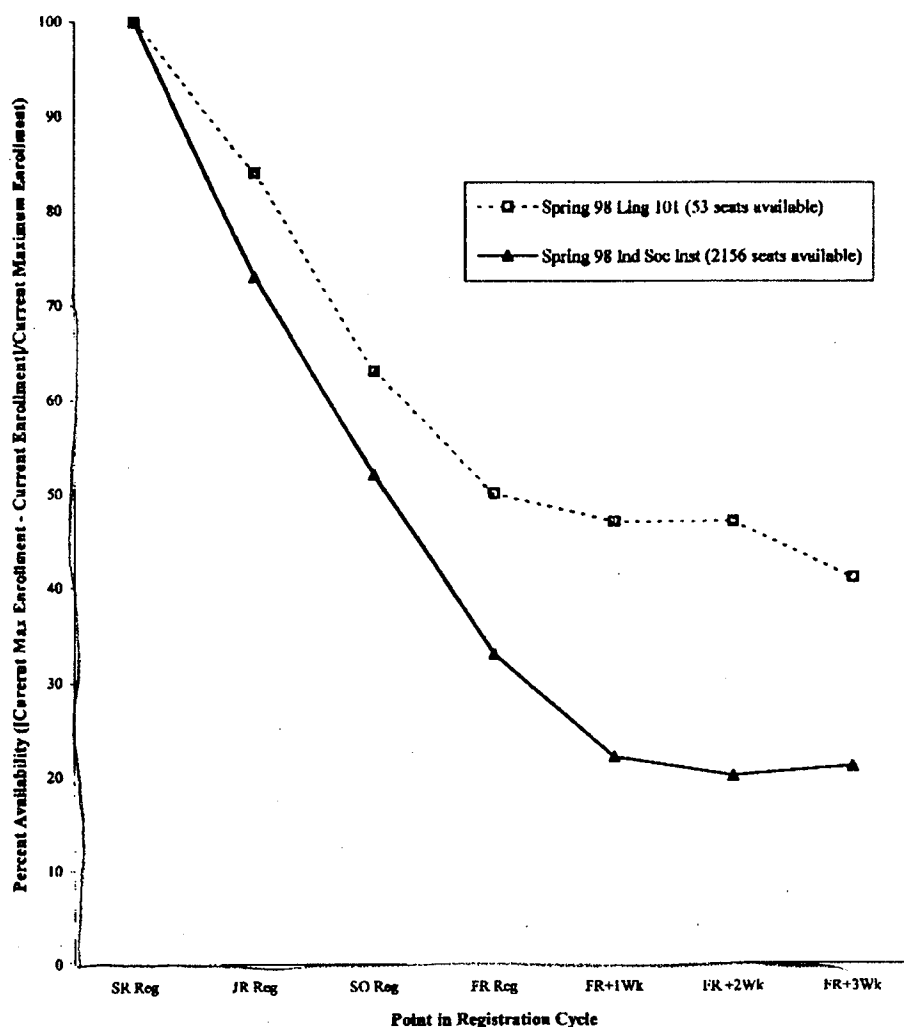
TABLE 1. Comparison of seats available in Linguistics 101 and other general education courses in the same study area as a function of the registration period at the University of Arizona.

those that are ostensibly related like psychology or communication. Table 1 provides a graphic display of one measure of the disparity. The solid line plots the total amount of space available over time in the University of Arizona general education study area ('Individuals, societies & institutions') that includes linguistics 101 during one registration cycle (registration for the Spring 1998 semester). The dotted line plots the amount of space available over the same time period in linguistics 101. Registration at this university begins with seniors and continues over an extended period of time as juniors, sophomores, and freshmen successively register. Thus, the amount of available space should decrease over time, with the slope of the line an indication of the intensity of the demand. The comparison of the position of the dotted line with that of the solid line reflects the relative demand for the basic linguistics course. The amount of available space in linguistics 101 is relatively more than that available in the curricular area overall throughout the registration period—an indication of less demand. Equally

unsetting, when freshmen begin to register, the demand does not increase, even though this is ostensibly a freshman-level course.

We do not have exactly comparable data for other institutions, but there is nothing to suggest that the situation the graph depicts is peculiar to this university. No one, not even a university administrator, could look at such information without wondering about the disparity: Do other disciplines know something about undergraduates and the undergraduate curriculum that linguists do not? Or is linguistics simply not a discipline to include as part of the undergraduate curriculum? Critically, from the point of view of linguistics programs, any administrator worth her salt has information like that displayed in this graph at her disposal. She knows what is going on in the departments she oversees—not only how many grants are pending and how much research money has been generated, but also the number of classes every faculty member teaches per semester, the credit hours that the program generates and, most importantly, how such performance measures compare to other units.

It is tempting to dismiss attention to such information as administrative 'bean-counting', but this ignores the simple economic facts of higher education: the vast majority of universities and colleges live and die by the tuition their students pay. (Most public research universities, for example, receive approximately one third of their budget from state allocations; the remainder must be generated from other sources—like tuition. Few have the cushion of a substantial endowment.) A dean may be willing to protect a high-quality department that generates relatively little undergraduate interest, as long as all the other indicators are positive, but it is much better for a department not to have to depend on the dean's beneficence or good judgment. As a consequence, no linguist should look at this graph with equanimity.

Although the source of the depressed demand for linguistics 101 deserves careful investigation, we won't speculate here on this question. Rather we take it as a given and offer the framework within which to construct a strategic institutionally based response.

First, the members of linguistics programs must participate in curricular bodies and governing structures. Undergraduates aren't alone in knowing little about linguistics. Our colleagues and our administrators, as well as members of our governing boards and our legislatures, are at least as ignorant. If linguists are institutionally visible and active, it is more difficult to argue that introductory linguistics courses don't have a place in the curricular structure.

· Second, there must be a clear-eyed assessment of the institutional situation and of the role that an introductory linguistics course can play within it. Linguistics 101 doesn't have the luxury of a basic physics or chemistry course in being required as a prerequisite for all science or pre-med students; it also doesn't have the advantage of a basic psychology or history course in being an assumed part of every student's curriculum. For the basic introductory linguistics course to attract a reasonable audience, linguistics programs must first understand what kind of undergraduates the institution attracts: Are they career-oriented? Are they well-prepared? What are the popular majors? Why are they popular? In addition, linguistics programs must be completely familiar with the curricular structure within which their courses could exist. Is there a general education program or are there multiple programs, varying by college or school? What are the criteria for a course to be part of the program? What kind of a spin would have to be put on a basic linguistics course to make it fit as a humanities option? a social science option? a science option?

Finally, and most difficult, there must be a commitment within every linguistics

program to the value of introductory courses in the health of the program, and, ulti-
mately, the health of the discipline. That is, introductory instruction in linguistics must
be valued at least as much as instruction in a graduate syntax or phonology course,
however value is determined in the institution in question. One way to operationalize
this value structure is for all faculty members to participate in the delivery of such
courses; another—at least as difficult to maintain—is for faculty members to assume
different kinds of instructional responsibilities, all equally valued and all equally neces-
sary. Neither approach is problem-free, of course. Some faculty members are much
less skilled in holding a student audience and, as a result, their colleagues pick up the
slack. But then, perhaps because everyone could step into the introductory course, it's
treated as low status work, a sign that the instructor doesn't care for, or isn't capable of,
serious linguistics. These issues must be addressed straightforwardly within linguistics
departments, so that whatever strategy is chosen is a conscious departmental decision.

This frankly pragmatic approach to the place of the introductory linguistics course in
the undergraduate curriculum could be seen as pandering, as not taking the fundamental
disciplinary basis seriously enough. The focus on course quality in the five vignettes
to follow should counter any uneasiness on this score.

2. VIGNETTE 1: STUDENTS LIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS. BRIAN D. JOSEPH. Introductory lin-
guistics at Ohio State University (OSU) has had great success over the roughly thirty-
year history of the Department of Linguistics, though not without some difficulties.
OSU is a state-supported land-grant school; thus, undergraduate education is crucial
to OSU's mission. Ultimately, enrollments drive the university's economy, with much
of the university's income deriving from a state subsidy per student plus student tuition.
Moreover, enrollments in introductory undergraduate classes justify and generate fund-
ing of graduate teaching associates (GTAs). Undergraduate and graduate education are
thus symbiotic.

In the 1970s and through the mid-1980s, the mainstay of undergraduate linguistics
at OSU was Ling 201, Introduction to Language, a general introduction to the phenome-
non of human language, with some linguistic analysis. It was taught in sections of up
to 35 students, mostly by GTAs, and was required in some popular majors, especially
elementary education. Even with no separate courses for linguistics majors (rather
these courses 'piggybacked' on introductory graduate-level courses), the undergraduate
program thrived, with Ling 201 leading the way. There were roughly 18 to 20 sections
per quarter, with 6 in the summer. These numbers meant that in this era, nearly 30%
of the OSU undergraduate student body at any one time had exposure to introductory
linguistics via 201 (some 8400 of approximately 30,000 undergraduates, freshmen
through seniors).

The late 1980s witnessed a significant shift as OSU undertook a major reform of
the core undergraduate curriculum, creating a general education curriculum (GEC).
Linguistics was redefined intellectually as mostly in social sciences, although the depart-
ment's administrative home was the College of Humanities. Simultaneously, changes
in the elementary education major began (the Holmes Initiative) and led to Ling 201
no longer being required in that program.

GTAs in the linguistics department have long been trained via a course (in the spring
quarter of their first year) designed to teach them about the teaching of introductory
linguistics as a topic, about the mechanics of teaching in general, and about teaching
linguistics at OSU in particular. GTA teaching has always been supervised by linguistics
faculty, most intensively for those in their first year in the classroom. Various formats

for the teaching-training course and GTA supervision have been tried, for example, rotating full responsibility for GTAs among different faculty members, using experienced GTAs to help out on these tasks, having a full-time faculty member responsible for all aspects of preparing and supervising GTAs, and so on. For the past five years, there has been a half-time auxiliary assistant professor focused on these responsibilities. Still, instructors traditionally enjoy great freedom in their classes, so that changes in the linguistics graduate program—moving toward greater specialization by graduate students earlier on in their careers—naturally led to 201, in the hands of (necessarily) increasingly technically oriented GTAs, becoming more of an introduction to linguistics than an introduction to language.

The curricular reform mentioned above also affected introductory linguistics. Several linguistics courses, especially in sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, were moved onto the social sciences list, while others withered away; there was no way for instance to fit a typology course into the new GEC rubrics. Consequently, Ling 201 became isolated in the humanities roster, and both the number of sections offered and enrollments in those sections plummeted. From as many as 22 sections per quarter in the early 1980s, the number fell to a low of 9 in some quarters in the early 1990s, with total enrollment under 300 several quarters (vs. highs around 700 in the 1980s).

Fortunately, this has a happy ending, so far, and the strategies that have rescued OSU's undergraduate introductory linguistics program point to several important lessons. Some solutions were conceptual: refocusing the introductory course more towards its original orientation as a nontechnical introduction to language. Some were curricular: increasing the number of sections of high-interest introductory courses in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (Language and Social Identity, Language and Gender, Language across Cultures) in each quarter, and working on new high interest courses (like Language and Technology).

Other solutions were more mechanical: psycholinguistics was cross-listed with psychology (drawing more readily on the large numbers of psychology majors). Also, the 'delivery' of 201 was changed, away from OSU's traditional five 48-minute meetings/week to formats with two two-hour sessions or three 1-hour-18-minute sessions; a mix of all three scheduling types is now offered.

Finally, there were pedagogical solutions. Pursuing teaching excellence paid off—three linguistics GTAs have recently won university-wide teaching awards and the department as a whole is in the running for a university award. Moreover, everyone strives for innovative, student-oriented, experience-based teaching. A bit of luck helped too, since the Department of Communications sought the linguistics department's permission to require 201 for its extremely popular major, creating an enrollment base like that once provided by elementary education.

The early returns are very promising. Enrollments in the introductory courses are now more robust, in both the number of viable sections and the total number of students in 201 and in sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics; compare 1994–95/1995–96, both with somewhat small enrollments, with 1996–97 and 1997–98:

1994–95: 34 sections; 904 students;   Summer '95: 6 sections; 70 students
1995–96: 40 sections; 947 students;   Summer '96: 7 sections; 91 students
1996–97: 41 sections; 1062 students; Summer '97: 8 sections; 151 students
1997–98: 47 sections; 1399 students

These results show that it pays to be flexible and to experiment (with offerings of new courses, new scheduling, and a new mix of course types), to persevere as courses

build a clientele (with the summer offerings), and to cooperate (when communications wanted to add 201 to its major).

More specifically, though, these results suggest that socially based linguistics topics (variation, social identity, gender) are ideal at OSU, because students live sociolinguistics in their daily lives (whereas they do not necessarily live linguistic analysis!). Moreover, the focus for introductory linguistics need not be a general survey; rather, altering the mix of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and a survey course among the introductory offerings has been successful.

Nonetheless, at OSU there is still a place for a general survey course. Many departments are reluctant, in an institutional economy based on where students take classes, to recommend to 'their' students that they take classes in other departments; thus, the most a language major might feel comfortable taking is one general course in linguistics.

Finally, for all the maneuvering in these successful strategies, in the end, to quote OSU's Woody Hayes, you 'win with people'. Individual instructors practicing innovative teaching techniques, the various teaching-award winners, the faculty who have committed time to developing the undergraduate program, and the continued commitment of everyone in the department (and the university) to serious training, supervision and evaluation of instruction have all collectively helped to make a difference for introductory linguistics at OSU.

3. VIGNETTE 2: THE LAST LINGUISTICS CLASS, MICHAEL FLYNN. Carleton College is a selective liberal arts college in rural Minnesota. Students come to the college from across the country, drawn by an academic program that is consistently ranked among the finest in the country. The linguistics program is relatively new. Founded in 1986, it currently has one permanent staff member. Courses are offered on a range of linguistic topics, including phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, philosophy of linguistics, language acquisition, and poetics. About one hundred twenty of Carleton's eighteen hundred students take at least one linguistics course each year. The course described here, Introduction to Linguistic Theory, is offered in the fall and spring trimesters. It regularly has an enrollment of 30, its maximum.

Much of the structure of the course can be seen as following from three principles. First, the course must explicitly engage issues that relate work in linguistics to broader questions of human nature and culture. Second, partly contrary to fact, we assume no student will take another linguistics course ever again. Put another way, we assume that the intellectual 'payoff' for every piece of terminological innovation, technical apparatus, and conceptual framework, must be contained within the course. Third, the really interesting writing in linguistics appears in the professional literature, not in introductory material.

We do not believe that an accurate and comprehensive summary of linguistic theory can be done within these constraints, and we do not try. Instead, freed from the obligation to set up further work in linguistics, each instructor chooses five or six items as targets. These are typically papers or books in linguistics that the instructor thinks are particularly exciting or would be of special interest to the students. Though these are usually drawn from a range of areas, no attempt is made to accurately represent the diversity of the field in the readings. The key consideration is that the instructor is enthusiastic about the material. We believe that it is likely that this enthusiasm will rub off on the students. The course is then primarily a set of preparations to engage this literature. One recent version of the course, for example, included Chomsky (1980) *Rules and representations;* Liberman and Mattingly (1985) 'The motor theory of speech

perception revised', and Lieberman (1998) *Eve spoke: Human language and human evolution.*

The 'on ramp' for Chomsky's book was four weeks long. It included specially designed exercises to introduce technical know-how and notation. In addition, students were asked to read and think about knowledge acquisition from a very general point of view. With the approach firmly in place, the preparation time for Liberman and Mattingly was considerably shorter, on the order of two weeks. Again, the focus was on analytic technique and terminology, such as 'second formant transition'. Given all that has gone before, Lieberman's book can be read with very little additional background. Surveys reveal that though students are not particularly fond of Chomsky's style, for example, they are very pleased to have read him in the original with understanding.

The challenges of preparing a course like this should not be underestimated. Often, special-purpose introductory material needs to be prepared, and this takes time. Since students in different sections of the intro course come to know different things, other courses therefore cannot presuppose any particular content. At Carleton at least, this has not been a problem. But we do believe that if students take another linguistics course after this one, they come to it with a lively appreciation of part of what the field is really about and a good sense of the excitement one can find at the cutting edge. Instructors enjoy teaching the course, even after many years, since they modify it to suit their current interests. Finally, students appreciate the presumption that they will be interested in the professional literature and have the capability to approach it with sophistication.

4. VIGNETTE 3: LANGUAGE-AND COURSES. RAE A. MOSES. At Northwestern University we have three gateway courses that introduce, respectively, phonetics/phonology, morphology/syntax and semantics/pragmatics, each simultaneously fulfilling the general education requirement and serving to recruit majors and minors. In addition, we have developed six courses for undergraduates who have little or no background in linguistics and for whom this may be their only linguistics course. In these courses we introduce linguistics within a framework of insights that linguistics brings to real-world issues. In each case, we address some subset of the following ten questions, questions we believe represent a reasonably comprehensive list of what the discipline can speak to with authority.

(1) How is human language defined?
(2) How can language be represented formally?
(3) What is the nature of human verbal capacity and how is language acquired?
(4) What is the systematic nature of the components of language?
(5) How can we analyze, build and test models of language?
(6) How is meaning conveyed? How is metaphor constructed and understood?
(7) How does language vary in time, space and situation? What is the difference between descriptive vs. prescriptive ideas of correctness.
(8) What are the social roots of the systems of language and how are they influenced by culture?
(9) What is the connection between language and thinking?
(10) What is the relationship between oral and written language?

The six courses we offer, Language and Gender, Language and Law, Language and Medicine, Language and Prejudice, Language and Sexual Diversity, and Language and Social Policy, represent special interests of the participating faculty. One can imagine

a proliferation of topics: Language and Advertising, Education, Humor, Politics, Workplace. None of these courses attempts broad coverage of linguistics or treats it as a unified science. In each, linguistic concepts are introduced as needed to address practical questions and linguistics is regarded as a tool kit that is used to address specific issues.

In Language and Gender, the definition of language and patterns of language acquisition are introduced as a foundation for explaining the acquisition of genderlects. Speech-act and politeness theories are introduced as a prelude to the discussion of indirectness in women's language. Turn-taking models set the stage for exploring the literature on conversational overlaps and interruptions. When we discuss the variety of meanings that tag questions can carry, we introduce their formal syntactic representation. The course is rooted in the sociocultural nature of language and thus covers basic sociolinguistic scholarship about the influence of gender on patterns of language use. This course and the Language and Prejudice course are the most popular of these courses, enrolling sixty or more from across the institution, usually even a handful of engineering students.

The Language and Medicine course is populated mostly by preprofessional students for whom this is the only linguistics course they will ever take. Many will be entering medical school soon and in four or five years will be treating patients. We begin by introducing the neurobiological bases of language, innateness and acquisition theory, all critical issues that a physician should understand. But the most pertinent contribution linguists can make to a young physician's education is an understanding of face-to-face communication and miscommunication. We present semantic modeling to make clear how physician and patient may and usually do have different semantic representations. Readings from Geoffrey Leech's book, *Semantics*, make clear the difference between denotative and connotative meaning. Linguistic work on metaphor is introduced before we read Susan Sontag's *Illness as metaphor* and *AIDS and its metaphors*. The relation between written and spoken language is a prelude to a discussion of the comprehensibility of written directions and the analysis of medical records as documents.

Language and Social Policy is a team-taught two-quarter sequence that is a part of our freshman seminar program. We use the *Cambridge encyclopedia of language* by David Crystal along with a reading packet and cover a good deal of general linguistics. While the theme of the course is language and identity, language and schooling, and language and the media, the text allows for natural connections to many related topics, for example, literacy, language development, bilingualism and language planning. Because of its length, it most closely resembles a general introduction to the field. We find that many of these students take more linguistics courses during their remaining years.

The courses described above and the other 'Language and' courses we teach recruit a diverse and important group of students at our university, one that we did not reach with our general introductory courses. The organizing principle of these courses let us introduce linguistic concepts on an as needed basis. For some students, this is their only opportunity to learn about linguistic scholarship; for others, it leads them to take another course or pursue a major. This way of packaging what linguists know has given us new audiences and opportunities. The fact that this approach has been successful raises interesting questions about whether other disciplines must similarly insinuate their basic concepts into their introductory coursework. Regardless of whether linguistics is peculiar in this regard, we have found that our 'Language and' courses have

expanded the population of students we reach and have provided a novel way to present the scholarship of the field.

5. VIGNETTE 4: LINGUISTICS AND EDUCATION, CHARLOTTE WEBB. In the 1970s teachers and future teachers in Southern California were encountering—and educating—an increasingly multilingual, multicultural student population. In the mid-1970s the Department of Linguistics and Oriental Languages (DLOL) at San Diego State University (SDSU) had developed a basic certificate that included the regular introductory linguistics course for our majors, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, dialectology and a theory and practice of ESL course. Language acquisition, together with a 'reduced theory' introductory course, evolved in the early 1980s. The curriculum was designed to give teachers and future teachers background that would enable them to understand the needs of non-native speakers of English. About five years ago, the State of California came out with the CLAD/BCLAD credential, which in essence demands that California teachers have the curriculum embodied in what was our original certificate.

Within this context, the program in linguistics at SDSU has continuously modified its introductory linguistics course, which almost exclusively serves future teachers. The enrollments for this class have always been large; currently we have approximately one thousand students a year.

In teaching this course, we begin by finding out what teachers will be required to teach about language in their own classrooms. This requirement has changed over the years; today, we note that considerable explicit knowledge of language is again being covered at the kindergarten through sixth grade level. We give diagnostic quizzes on the first day of class to find out what kinds of language-related knowledge our students enter the class with. Over the past twenty years, it is fair to say that students have arrived with less and less explicit knowledge of language, and this situation has required us to modify how we teach our introductory course. Today many students have trouble identifying the number of syllables in a word, nouns, verbs, subjects and predicates; they are 'blank slates' with respect to explicit language knowledge when they arrive in our classes.

We begin with language myths and language change followed by a discussion of prescriptive and descriptive grammars. Elementary and high school teachers are expected to impart information about language standards, so this issue receives considerable attention. The notion of dialects and registers is discussed briefly at this point. An extended unit on syntax follows this introductory section. Notions such as grammaticality, ambiguity and synonymy are presented, followed by information on constituents and basic parts of speech. We cover regular and irregular verbs, various kinds of pronouns, phrase structure and a few 'transformations'. Most of us find it useful to introduce the notions of abstract structure and surface or concrete structure, though no attempt is made to be true to any particular theoretical model.

Teachers in California are now expected to employ a phonics-based approach (as well as others) in teaching reading, so our next section on phonetics is quite appropriate. We stress the grapheme-phoneme correspondences, with the addition of teaching a fairly standard articulatory phonetics unit. We attempt to draw examples for phonetics and phonology almost exclusively from English and Spanish, the major languages that teachers will encounter in this geographical region. Various geographic and ethnic dialects are described with the advanced artillery of phonetic transcription. We end with another look at language variation.

This curriculum changes periodically, and, it is critical to stress, the delivery of the

material is as important as the concepts taught. We make an attempt at every juncture to relate the content of the introductory course to the content in the classroom. We avoid extended theoretical argumentation and stick to the facts as much as possible.

6. VIGNETTE 5: A PLETHORA OF INTRODUCTIONS, CARI L. SPRING. Employed at three universities over six years, my job was to teach introductory courses, dozens of them. In the three departments where I taught, the student profile varied with the institution—mature, young; liberal arts major, undeclared major; working class, upper class; ethnically homogeneous, diverse. But two facts became quickly apparent at each institution. The students, whatever their background, came to my class not just ignorant of language, but profoundly misinformed. And, to my surprise, students did not universally love language or linguistics.

In the face of this reality, rather than depend on a departmental approach—since the department was not constant nor generally had developed a consensus on how to teach introductory linguistics—I developed a 'universal student' approach, an approach intended to work whether the student was interested or irked, major or nonmajor. I asked myself two questions: What are the fundamental problems in learning linguistics? How can these problems be solved, independent of the institution and its typical student? The following sketches the answers that emerged as I slowly admitted defeat with the 'baby theoretical' approach and replaced it with a 'living linguistics' course.

First, because students are often intimidated by a subject about which they know nothing, I make the theoretical familiar and have students begin learning linguistics in a context that is ordinary to them, by using spoken language data from a real-world context in which they are participants. I call each such experience a field-based learning exercise (FBLE). Using real-life settings from the student's culture, FBLEs ease students into linguistics by allowing them to discover linguistic principles. This approach takes account of the fact that most students have no prior experience with understanding the linguistic approach to language.

The course begins by requiring that each student do a three-minute tape recording and transcription of spoken language. (Transcription at this point uses the standard orthography.) This exercise immediately shows students, through experiences with their own worlds, that spoken and written language are very different. It also forces them to confront the fact—from noncontrived data that they collected—that spoken language is not a corrupted version of written language, but has a systematicity of its own. Finally, the exercise requires students to recognize and come to terms with a fundamental scientific requirement: the accurate recording of data.

The remaining assignments involve repeated looks at the three-minute segments. The first assignment has the student study the segment as a discourse, looking for semantic and pragmatic organization. Students find linguistic principles operating in their own worlds, a conclusion that experientially underscores the value of this hitherto foreign field of knowledge. For example, the use of *bad* to mean 'particularly good' is common to the students' data sets and the discussion of this development sets the stage for lively interchanges. At this point, a second transcription of the segment is required. Students have discovered from the first transcription that the standard spelling is inadequate to the task, so they are invited to try to describe the sounds on their tapes with whatever tools they might bring to bear. This exercise teaches the need for a transcription system other than English orthography and, as each student develops an idiosyncratic system, the results demonstrate why a standard is needed. In previous classes, students would still be confusing letters with sounds at the end of the term. This exercise virtually eliminates that problem.

The next assignment has two parts. First, students choose twenty words from their field corpus on which to do analysis. The word choices are guided by parameters designed to force morphological analysis. For example, five words have to have derivational affixes, five must have inflectional affixes, and so on. Second, students choose ten sentences from their corpus, half of which must be analyzable according to a simple notion of constituency introduced in class and the other half of which must present problems for this notion. By demonstrating recognition of the difference, students show their understanding of the principles at issue. They are also invited to consider what would be required to analyze the 'misfit' sentences.

The third assignment focuses on phonetic and phonological analysis. Students are asked to do a fine-grained analysis of ten seconds from their segments, using a standard transcription system. Their previous difficulties with transcription have made them receptive to the benefits of such a system. Finally, through continued bibliographic research and further analysis, students expand on one of the three assignments as a final project.

Three points about the FBLE method are noteworthy. First, because the data have been collected in the students' own cultural milieux, sociolinguistic and dialectal issues permeate the course. (Hence, there is no separate section devoted to sociolinguistics.) Second, the complexity of human language is indelibly demonstrated by the fact that three minutes of data can serve as the basis for an entire semester's study. Third, the authenticity of the data makes linguistics profoundly relevant—even if the student never takes another linguistics course.

Some general points can be drawn from my experiences. None of these is about linguistics per se; rather, they are about learners. But they are especially important to linguistics, since the field confronts a chasm of ignorance and misinformation, a chasm that we, the keepers of the discipline, must bridge.

To remain fresh in the love of language, we must incorporate what we love about linguistics in the courses we teach. If data move you, have students collect data. Because you get to read them, you get to draw from them. If psycholinguistics is your area, have students do psycholinguistics. Because you get to analyze it, you get to use it to fuel your ongoing research. (This is especially important for the new graduates teaching these courses.) Above all, refrain from assigning canned exercises that bore you—YOU have to read them, comment on them, grade them, day after day, month after month, year after year.

If your students are mainly nontraditional—raising families, holding jobs, and otherwise invested in life outside of academics—ensure success by having them learn linguistics inside of their worlds. Tailor your course to bring linguistics to them. Linguistics is what people do, in just about every aspect of their lives. Build from this fact to create courses that students like and respect.

Many students report that the vocabulary of linguistics, being completely unfamiliar, is a large part of the problem with learning linguistics. Semantics/pragmatics is, in more common terminology, meaning (inside and outside of context); morphology/syntax is (word and phrase) structure; and phonetics/phonology can be introduced as sound. Use the common to introduce the unfamiliar.

Finally, don't assume intrinsic interest. In a sense, linguists are the worst people to teach linguistics. We are linguists because linguistics grabbed us, because we liked it, because it was easy or because it was hard, the only challenging course to cross our curricular paths. But we chose linguistics because something about it took hold and simply would not let go. But our experience may not be—indeed, is not—widely shared

by the average nonmajor. If we assume intrinsic interest in linguistics, we will likely lose too many students. This point is underscored in the four vignettes preceding mine, where success has come by relating linguistics to other aspects of the students' worlds and by respecting the importance of that relationship. Long after the faint remembrance of phoneme and morpheme fades, the sense of fun and excitement in learning about language and linguistics in that introductory course will remain. And, as the bill to demand 'English only' passes through the Senate one more time, Senator M will pick up the phone and call to ask: 'What do I need to know about linguistics in order to decide on this bill?' After all, Senator M was in your introductory class.

7. CONCLUSION. The successful undergraduate linguistics programs and courses described in these vignettes share a willingness to innovate according to the needs, abilities, and interests of the students. These programs share knowledge of who their students are and they respond to this knowledge by consciously creating appropriate disciplinary introductions to satisfy both majors and nonmajors. The courses change over time in accord with generational or institutional change. But all move far beyond an introduction to the discipline through linguistics-as-theory.

As a young discipline, linguistics is still defining its place in the undergraduate curriculum. We have argued here for a very pragmatic approach to this issue, at least for the time being, one that builds on student interests and institutional realities to create and sustain enrollments. We hope that our argument will encourage a disciplinewide discussion and debate. All linguistics programs, including primarily graduate programs, should care passionately about its outcome, if the discipline of linguistics is to survive and flourish.

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