

Teaching Introductory Linguistics with Justice: Updating an Open Educational Resource

TiLCoP Canada (Teaching in Linguistics Community of Practice)

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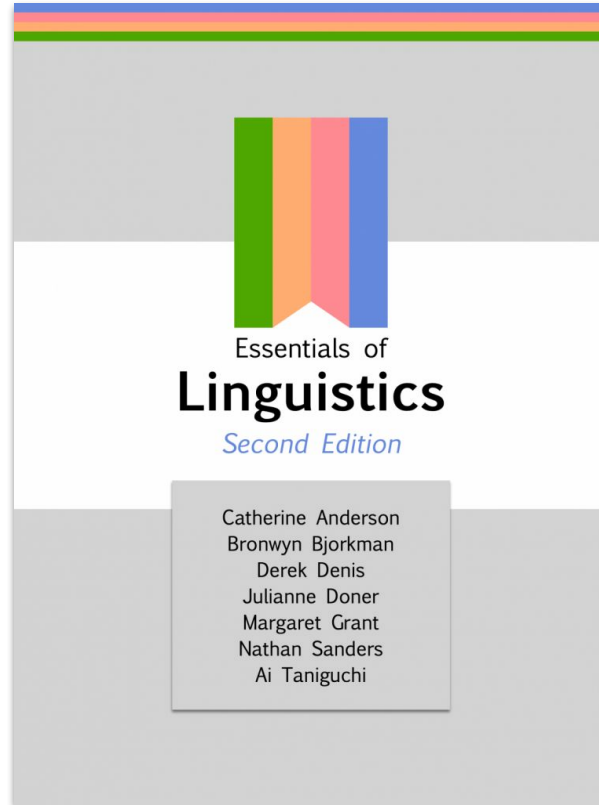
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Essentials of Linguistics, 2nd edition

<http://EssentialsOfLinguistics.ca>



The process

EoL 1: An accidental textbook

Flipped class:
short videos
plus textbook,
no tutorials.

2014-15

Publisher
issued yet
another new
edition.

2016

eCO grant to
adapt existing
OER.

2017

***Essentials of
Linguistics***

2018

EoL 1st edition

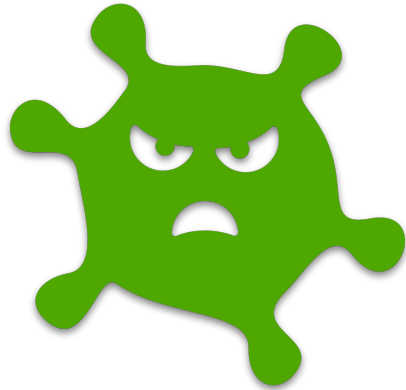


- Accessible multimedia format.
- Special section on teaching Mohawk.
- Easily searchable and editable.
- Freely and widely available.



- Closely tied to commercial textbook.
- Some core sections weak.
- Little attention to signed languages.

Teaching in Linguistics Community of Practice



Twitter →
Zoom →
TiLCoP

eCO VLS
Grant to adapt
existing OER

*Essentials of
Linguistics 2*

2020

2020

2021

2022

EoL 2nd Edition



Accessibility enhanced.

Multi-format.

Screenreader-navigable.

FREE.



Subfield specialists.

Better diversity of languages,
spoken and signed.

Reorganized to center justice.

Textbook-level considerations

Teaching with justice

- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Fair compensation
- Speaking truth to power



Justice requires accessibility.

FREE

Multi-format

Fonts & Colours

Screenreader-
navigable

Justice requires diversity.

- Avoid Anglo-centrism.
- Examples from many spoken languages, especially Indigenous languages.
- Examples from many signed languages.
- Modality-neutral.
- Images of diverse humans.
- Diverse names in example sentences.
- Interviews with five Indigenous language experts.

Justice requires paying for people's labour.

- Paid project manager + accessibility consultant.
- Paid ASL signer and Indigenous language experts.
- Paid artist for some images, others are CC-licensed.
- Paid chapter reviewers.
- Paid reviewers for whole book:
 - Indigenous linguist.
 - Deaf linguist.

Justice requires speaking truth to power.

- Acknowledge the colonial history of linguistics.
- Consider the ethics of linguistics research.
- Foreground power and privilege.
- Weave justice issues throughout the text.

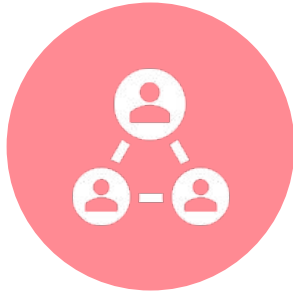
Chapter-level considerations

Chapters

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------|
| 1 | Human Language and Language Science | 9 | Reclaiming Indigenous Languages |
| 2 | Language, Power and Privilege | 10 | Language Variation and Change |
| 3 | Phonetics | 11 | Child Language Acquisition |
| 4 | Phonology | 12 | Adult Language Learning |
| 5 | Morphology | 13 | Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics |
| 6 | Syntax | 14 | Historical Linguistics |
| 7 | Semantics | 15 | Language Diversity |
| 8 | Pragmatics | | |

Why does linguistics matter for our students?

Some highlights



Language and power



Data diversity



Indigenous voices

Some highlights



Language and power

(Charity Hudley et al.,
2020a, 2020b and others)

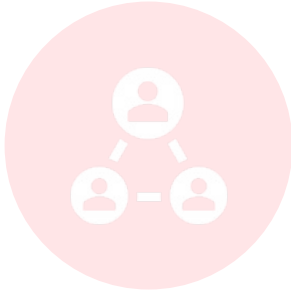


Data diversity



Indigenous voices

Some highlights



Language and power



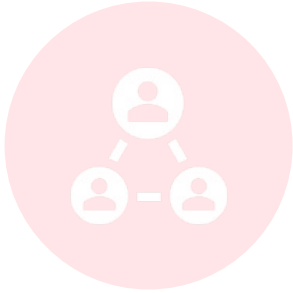
Data diversity

(Picone 2022, SALTED
2022 and others)



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Language and power



Data diversity



Indigenous voices

(Natives4Linguistics blog,
and others)

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Addressing equity and justice

Chapter 2: Language, Power & Privilege



Language and power

- **Performativity:** Language affects the world and can do harm.
- **Enacting power and privilege:** politeness, offense, and slurs.
- **Enacting power and privilege:** names, pronouns, and accent prejudice.
- **Encoding power and privilege in law:** language policies.
- **Calls to Action:** Resist doing harm with language!

Addressing equity and justice

Chapter 3: Phonetics



Data diversity

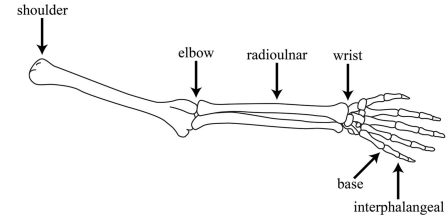
- In-depth discussion of **modality**: signed languages have phonetics too!
- Dedicated sections on articulation, description, and notation of **signed languages**, on par with spoken languages.
- **Audio examples** from a variety of spoken languages (Polish, Spanish, Japanese, Hindi, and Vietnamese) and video examples from ASL.

Addressing equity and justice

Chapter 3: Phonetics



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Addressing equity and justice

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Addressing equity and justice

Chapters 7 & 8: Semantics and Pragmatics



Data diversity

- **Diversification of data**
- Cross-linguistic variation in pragmatics (§8.2, 8.5, 8.8)
- Pragmatics and **neurodiversity** (§8.6)
- Acknowledgement of **variation in acceptability judgments** (§7.4, 8.2, 8.6, 8.7)

Addressing equity and justice

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Addressing equity and justice

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Addressing equity and justice

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Addressing equity and justice

Chapters 7 & 8: Semantics and Pragmatics



Data diversity

“When we study pragmatics, we need to be aware that **there are cultures and conversational norms beyond your own.**

Encountering unfamiliar discourse rules in a language that you may not have encountered before may give rise to feelings of surprise, and that’s OK – but we hope that you will use your linguist mind to prevent this surprise from turning into negative judgments about other cultures and languages. **Remember, all forms of language are valid!**” (Chapter 8)

Addressing equity and justice

Chapters 7 & 8: Semantics and Pragmatics



Language and power

- The **classist history of dictionaries**, and how they are not the authority of linguistic meaning (§7.10)
- **Language and law**: State of La. v. Demesme (2017)'s “lawyer dog” case (§8.3)
 - “Why don’t you get me a lawyer dawg” supposedly could have meant ‘Why don’t you get me a canine lawyer’

Addressing equity and justice

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Addressing equity and justice

Chapter 9: Reclaiming Indigenous Languages



Indigenous voices

David Kanatawakhon Maracle
Kanien'kéha

Mary Ann Corbiere
Anishnaabemwin

Chantale Cenerini
Michif

Rae Anne Claxton
Hul'q'umi'num'

Annauk Olin
Iñupiaq

Addressing equity and justice

Chapter 9: Reclaiming Indigenous Languages



Indigenous voices

“I would say that **relationships [with linguists and the field of linguistics] have not always been easy**. And that that is something that I work for, as a student of linguistics, and something that I always try to remind myself, my family and my community, that we haven’t always had great relations either with institutions for education. And those are things that we have overcome, that we have collaborated with, that we have voiced our own needs within. And **that’s something that I strive to do within linguistics, is to be a voice for my people, and for what we need at a community level.**”
(Rae Anne Claxton, Chapter 9)

Thinking ahead

Opportunities for growth

- Video examples from more signed languages.
- Commission art from members of relevant communities.
- Expand and diversify authorship.



Collaboration affords justice.





Thank you!

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🐦 [@tilcop](https://twitter.com/tilcop)
🌐 <http://www.tilcop.ca>

Appendix

References

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- Konnely, L., Umbal, P., & Sanders, N. (2021). The Diverse Names Database: A Tool for Creating More Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Linguistic Example Sentences. Canadian Linguistic Association.
- Nagy, N. and M. Meyerhoff. (2008). Social lives in language. In M. Meyerhoff and N. Nagy (eds.) *Social lives in language: Sociolinguistics and multilingual speech communities – Celebrating the work of Gillian Sankoff*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
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EoL2 in the broader current landscape of linguistics

Broader context: advancing linguistics pedagogy

- Advocating for a more **inclusive linguistics pedagogy** (Charity Hudley et al., 2020a, 2020b)
- For many students, intro is their only exposure to the field of linguistics
- We really asked ourselves, **why does linguistics matter for our students?**
- What skills and knowledge do students need to have at the end of intro?
- **What truly is the core of linguistics?**

Charity Hudley et al. *Perspectives* paper

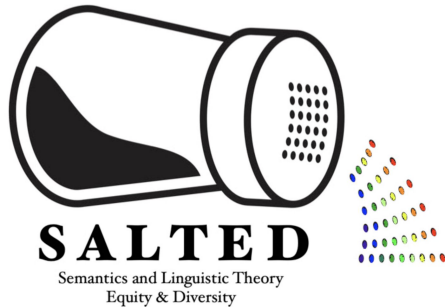
“We are challenged to think about how we can center the lives and experiences of people of various racial backgrounds, rather than primarily centering whiteness, in linguistics departments. In doing so, we must more directly ask the question: **how would linguistics have to change in order for more people from various racial groups to actively want to study, teach, and learn linguistics?** We also need to emphasize that these are necessarily **intersectional issues** and that racialization is intimately tied to inequities on the basis of gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, citizenship, and other parameters of social difference.” (Charity Hudley et al. 2020a)

Responding to calls from Indigenous colleagues

In June 2021, a statement was issued by Indigenous linguists and language scholars ([Natives4Linguistics 2021](#)) calling on linguists to:

- “Educate [themselves] and [their] students on how to **critically engage with texts about Indigenous languages and cultures written from outsider perspectives**”
- “**Discuss exploitative, extractive research practices**, past and present, that continue to harm Indigenous communities today”
- “Reflect on [their] own research and teaching practices and how they may or may not reproduce harmful colonial ideologies and practices. **Commit to ethical, collaborative research practices.**”

Call for action in semantics



- This year, [Semantic and Linguistic Theory](#) (SALT)'s committee on Equity and Diversity (SALTED) has a [workshop](#) on the issue of Anglo-centricism in semantics
- Addressing questions such as:
 - “What are the barriers to conducting and disseminating semantics research on non-English and non-prestige language varieties? What are some solutions?”
 - “What are the barriers to teaching semantics using these language varieties (both as data and medium of instruction)? What are some solutions?”
 - “What opportunities would incorporating these language varieties present to semantics teaching and research?”
 - **“How can the field of semantics become more equitable to students and scholars who use these language varieties?”**

Recent *American Speech*/ADS discussion

“The *American Dialect Society*, founded in 1889, is **dedicated to the study of the English language** in North America, and of other languages, or dialects of other languages, influencing it or influenced by it.”

“[*American Speech*] is **concerned principally with the English language** in the Western Hemisphere, although articles dealing with English in other parts of the world, the influence of other languages by or on English, and linguistic theory are also published.”

Just what is
“American Speech”
anyway?

(Picone 2022)

Reflects the **monolingual and Euro-American data bias** in variationist sociolinguistics in general (Nagy and Meyerhoff 2008, Stanford 2016).

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 4: Phonology

- Foundational concepts of phonological change, phonotactic restriction introduced with signed languages first.
- Reinforce the idea that phonology is not specific to, or defined by, spoken languages.

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapters 5 & 6: Morphology and Syntax

- Reduce Anglocentrism by including examples from Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), Cree, Halkomelem, Inuktitut, and Kanien'kéha (Mohawk).
- Emphasize variation across individuals and communities.
- Avoid reifying “native speaker” grammaticality judgments.
- Names in example sentences drawn from the Diverse Names Database (Konnely et al., 2021)
- Still too English focused!

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 10: Language Variation and Change

- Examples of language variation from Auslan/NZSL, Mandarin, Inuktitut, Multicultural London English, and Tagalog.
- Acknowledge dearth of analysis of languages others than English, French, and Spanish.
- Discuss role of settler colonialism plays in the current dialectology of North America.
- Case study of Lumbee English (an Indigenous tribe in North Carolina).

Auslan and NZSL Variants for NAME



Citation Form



Lowered Variant

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 11: Child Language Acquisition

- Use gender-neutral language for parents.
- Raise question of access to language: audism, oralism, cochlear implants, etc.
- Highlight parallels between acquiring sign and acquiring speech.
- Interrogate “30-million word gap” and “quality” input
- Acknowledge multilingual environments.
- Still too English-focused!



Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 12: Adult Language Learning

- Problematize concepts like *native, fluent, second, foreign*.
- Acknowledge racist, prescriptive standards in language teaching.
- Highlight interconnectedness of language, identity, community, tradition.
- Include adult learning of signed languages.

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 13: Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics

- Adopt modality-neutral language where possible and modality-specific language where particular experiments are discussed.
- Section on word recognition includes sign recognition.
- Acknowledge lack of language diversity in psycholinguistics and showcase new research that breaks this pattern.
- Still too English-centric!

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 14: Historical Linguistics

- Include discussion on the difficulty of reconstructing sign language families.
- Counter the “creole exceptionalism” myth (DeGraff 2005)

Addressing equity and justice:

Chapter 15: Language Diversity

- Discuss linguistic diversity in the context of colonialism, country borders, and historical conquests.
- Highlight regions of the world with a high degree of variation.
- Discuss the factors involved in language endangerment.
- Describe Indigenous language families in Canada.
- Acknowledge lack of typological work on modality.

