

A. Orienting an introductory linguistics course towards an in-class hands-on fieldwork exercise.

1. How to teach towards the fieldwork exercise

- Know exactly what skills you want to teach and why.
- Tell them. Clearly. (e.g., section guides) As a corollary, you also tell them what they don't need to know. This helps them focus.
- Make sure your teaching materials are absolutely clear on what you want them to know. You can pick and choose your way through any text, but you may need to clarify to the students how you are using the material in the text, or which material you are focusing on. (e.g., additional handouts)
- Make them practice those skills. (e.g., in-class or

homework problems)

- Hold them responsible for those skills (e.g., quizzes)

2. What basic skills students should have for the exercise

- Simple phonetic transcription
- Basic understanding of phonemic contrast
- Basic morphological analysis
- Basic grasp of syntactic phrase structure rules
- Grasp of syntactic rules for question formation

3. Preparing the exercise beforehand

- Line up informants. Some possible sources: the students' friends, a foreign student center, a refugee center. Conscript colleagues. Can you get modest funding to pay informants? (e.g. dining coupon for students, \$10 - \$20

for members of the community)

- Meet with informants beforehand to tell them what the exercise will involve or to go over the exercise. You can go through it with them if you need more confidence about what to expect in the language.
- Organize the students beforehand: Divide them into groups (3-5) depending on ratio of informants to students. Make sure students are put to work only on languages they know nothing about. Mix strong and weak students. The students can hand in the exercise as group, which makes the grading manageable. Even very weak students who participate passively still get something from the exercise.

4. How to run the fieldwork exercise

- Organize logistics for that day. Make sure informants can

find your room. Arrange the room so students can gather in groups around their informant. (Beg borrow or steal more chairs if you have to.)

- Working with students and informants during the exercise: Emphasize to the students that they don't need to do the phonetics perfectly. You can hand out something about the consonants and vowels in the language to each group. Ask the informants to help with phonetics only. Otherwise they should only answer questions asking how to say something in their language. Circulate around to help. (It is useful to have an assistant for this.)
- Have fun. Marvel at what your students are doing.