

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
ENGLISH DEPARTEMNT**

**English 227 INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE**

Language, a uniquely human phenomenon, touches every part of our lives. It enables us to voice our ideas, tell our jokes, achieve our education, and express our feelings. Language is complex in its structure, varied in its use, and still the subject of investigation by many researchers. Appreciating its complexity is important in understanding what it means to be human.

**COURSE GOALS**

The purpose of this course is to help students gain a broad understanding of human language as a complex biological system as well as a social construct. As the course progresses, students will be lead to examine their own beliefs and attitudes about language and language use. They will also develop an awareness of the diversity of language systems as well as their fundamental similarities by getting a taste for most of the subfields of linguistics: phonetics, phonology, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, syntax, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, natural language processing, and sociolinguistics. Students will acquire some tools and experience techniques for linguistic analysis, and will use them to discover some of the organizing principles of a language.

**RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS**

*Required Textbook*

Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams. 2003. *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: Heinle. (7<sup>th</sup> edition)

In addition to this basic textbook, readings and activities from other sources listed under “References” will be used for reinforcement or for presentation of topics not adequately covered in the required textbook.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

Final Grade will be based on:

Quiz I, II, Final Exam:	23% each
Homework:	21%
Class Participation:	10%

## Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Activities</b>
1	Introduction and overview of course requirements The nature of language READINGS: PINKER CHAPTER 1	
2	The words of language READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 3	Due: Assignment I Essay comparing 1 <sup>st</sup> language acquisition to 2 <sup>nd</sup> language acquisition
3	Sentence patterns (1) READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 4	
4	Sentence patterns (2)	Due: Assignment II Past tense productivity experiment
5	Sentence patterns (3)	<b>QUIZ I</b>
6	The sounds of language (1) READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 6	
7	The sounds of language (2)	Due: Assignment III Phonetics practice exercises
8	Language acquisition READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 8	
9	Language and the brain (1) READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 2	
10	Language and the brain (2)	<b>QUIZ II</b>
11	Language processing: Human and Computer (1) READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 9	Due: Assignment IV Essay relating to methods of investigating relation between language and the brain
12	Language processing (2)	
13	The meaning of language READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 5	
14	Language variation READINGS: FROMKIN, RODMAN, AND HYAMS CHAPTER 10	Due: Assignment V Collecting college slang word and analyzing language in advertisements
15	Language and gender READINGS: TANNEN 1990 CHAPTERS 1, 3, 7	

## COURSE POLICIES

### *Grading*

Grades are not assigned on a curve.

### ***Attendance***

You are expected to attend all class sessions. Those who miss NINE or more class sessions, no matter what their excuses are, will be dropped automatically from the class. Needless to say, you will be held responsible for any materials covered during your absence. Participation in this course can be satisfied by contributing to the discussion in class and by asking questions. You are also encouraged to communicate with me by e-mail and stop by my office if you want to discuss issues related to the course readings/assignments.

### ***Academic Integrity***

You are all expected to uphold AUB's Code of Student Conduct (see Student Handbook Appendix). Note that both cheating and plagiarism are violations of the University's academic conduct regulations and are subject to disciplinary action, which might lead to a Dean's warning, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

### **REFERENCES**

- Akmajian, A., Demers, R.A. and Hamish, R.M. 1984. *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Finegan, E. 1994. *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- O'Grady, W., Dobrovolsky, M. and Katamba, F. 1996. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*. Londong: Longman. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)
- Pinker, S. 1994. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Stewart, T. W., and Vaillette, N., eds. 2001. *Language Files: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. Department of Linguistics, Ohio State University. (8<sup>th</sup> edition)
- Tannen, D. 1990. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine Books.